SPECIAL SUPERHEROES ISSUE

JOHN BYRNE TO TAKE OVER HULK!

COMICS FEATURE

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SUPERHEROES
AN INTERVIEW WITH
JACK KIRBY
THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF
SPIDER-MAN
Ron Goulart on
THE GOLDEN AGE
Max Allan Collins on
JOE PALOOKA
Steve Perrin on
SUPERHERO GAMES
Jacobs and Jones on
THE REBIRTH OF SUPERHEROES
THE DAWN OF THE SILVER AGE
A SIGNING SESSION WITH
DON HECK

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COMICS FEATURE

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Jacobs and Jones whisk us back in time to the rebirth of the superheroes. Watch as Hawkman flies again, GL is reinvented, the atom first shrinks and the mightiest heroes of their day band together.
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SUPERHEROES A TALK WITH JACK KIRBY

Jack Kirby is the most explosive creative force to ever hit the four-color world of comics. He laid the foundations for the Marvel Age of superheroes. He co-created the first adventures of the Fantastic Four, the Avengers, the X-Men, the Hulk, Iron Man and so many others that it reads like a roster of the world's favorite superheroes. Before that he co-created Captain America and laid the guidelines for crime, war, western, kid gang, and romance comics. Since Marvel he has created fantastic new concepts for other publishes and is now working on the Hunger Dogs for DC. In this frank interview Kirby reveals much of what makes him the creative dynamo he is. By James Van Hise.

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A SIGNING SESSION WITH DON HECK

Don Heck is the pro's pro. He is on every top artist's favorites list and he has sold more X-Men than Neal Adams and more Justice League of America than George Perez. Yet he is virtually ignored by organized comic book fandom. In this brief session John Peel tries to rectify that error and offer a glimpse of the personality behind the creative genius.

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Will meets the Justice League of America courtesy of Superman and Jacobs and Jones.

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FEATURE NEWS

JOHN BYRNE TAKES ON THE GREEN GIANT, ABANDONS CANADIAN SUPERHERO TEAM

John Byrne has decided to abandon the Canadian team of superheroes he helped create and guide over the years, Alpha Flight, in favor of everyone's favorite irradiated monster, The Hulk. In one of the most unexpected creative changes in recent comics, Byrne will become the writer/artist for **The Hulk** beginning with issue 313 while Bill Mantlo and Mike Mignola become the creative team for **Alpha Flight** starting with 28.

A special crossover is scheduled to occur between the two titles in which not only the characters will be crossing over but also the creators. In that story, Alpha Flight will be probing other dimensions on a mission of their own, at which time they make contact with The Hulk, bringing him back to Earth. This will end the year-long exile to which Bruce Banner was condemned by Doctor Strange.

"As I did with the **Fantastic Four**, I'm going to treat my first issue as if it is the first issue of the series," Byrne commented.

"I want to get back to The Hulk as he was in the first six issues by Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko," John added. "To me, the definitive **Hulk** had him locked in that little room under the lake, pounding on that concrete door. That's primal Hulk."

Byrne doesn't plan to bring back many of the old villains, though he said he does have a story planned featuring the Metal Master, and he may use the Absorbing Man. One element he does have in mind for the series is constant transition.

"For everyone who's been with Marvel since the beginning, this will be like old home week," he noted, "And for all of the new readers it will be a whole new direction."

When Byrne took over writing the **Fantastic Four** there was a certain amount of controversy, particularly among the book's former writers, due to the fact that he seemed determined to ignore the several hundred issue history of the title and return to the roots that had been laid down by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. The book began to sell many more copies and the controversy passed. Now Byrne seems determined

© Marvel Comics Group

Pencils by John Byrne give an idea of his approach to The Hulk comic book for which he will be providing both the art and writing beginning with issue 313.

to repeat the process on another of the early Marvel creations. It appears that Byrne feels that he was born in the wrong decade and since he could not share in the early days of Marvel he is doing the next best thing. Only time will tell if his additions to the comic book universe will be as lasting as those of his obvious idol Jack Kirby. He has yet to show the incredible creative energy of inventing scores of new lasting characters but then again he is still comparatively young. Who knows what the future may hold for this talented writer/artist.

Meanwhile, Bill Mantlo is looking forward to taking on **Alpha Flight** with great anticipation. "I'm very impressed with what John has done with Alpha Flight," he commented. "It's going to be a tough act to follow. I'm very excited to have the chance."

DC Comics

In the upcoming limited series Aquaman will be gaining a new costume.

AQUAMAN SET TO SAIL

Aquaman, King of the Seven Seas, will be portrayed as a character with depth and insight in a new four-part limited series written by DC's Design Director Neal Pozner and illustrated by Craig Hamilton. Or so it says in my press release from DC dated October 4, 1984. Attempts have been made numerous times to accomplish exactly that from various different angles. As is obvious from the fact that the aquatic hero lacks a title of his own, the tries have not exactly been sales champions. Now Pozner and Hamilton have their work cut out for them, and perhaps it is fortunate that this is the first actual series attempt for both creators or they might not have been willing to make the attempt. Hopefully, whatever the result, DC will realize the difficulty of the project and the creators will not become discouraged.

Although water-based heroes have had quite a hard time of it in comics for some decades now (the last and only really successful merman being Timely's Sub-Mariner in the '40s) DC seems to be making a real serious effort to establish Aquaman. First they made him the new leader of the Justice League of America, carefully removing all of the other potentially interesting characters from the book, and now they are trying him in his own limited series. While they have not scheduled it yet, perhaps waiting to have the results in hand to judge, they do state that it "will probably be published in 1985". How's that for hedging your bets?

"For 40 years, Aquaman has rushed into battle filled with anger that was never really explained," points out writer Neal Pozner. Perhaps he is thinking of the Sub-Mariner? In my copies, of issues of his own series, **Adventure Comics** where he appeared as a back-up and **Justice League of America** where he was a founding member of the team, he certainly wasn't filled with anger but rather one of the most stable characters in comics. At some points he fought with his wife and sidekick, felt personal loss and even professed divided loyalties over his kingship of Atlantis (usually as echoes of his neighbor over at Marvel) but normally he was quite bland—and that was his problem.

Perhaps writer Pozner plans to try to change that, but writing retroactive history also seems dangerous. Well, let us let him continue, "In the mini-series, we pick up where the **Justice League** leaves off, and we develop Aquaman into a sympathetic character who grows over the course of the series. The Aquaman who emerges at the end will be a very different character from the one who begins the series. I am particularly interested in Aquaman's relationship with his brother, The Ocean Master. The series is really in the realm of fantasy and magic, and part of it is a heavy-duty confrontation between the brothers.

"There's a lot of potential for mythological background to Aquaman," he continues, "and no one has ever done anything with that before. I want to develop that to make Aquaman a hero readers care about.

"During the series, Aquaman will get a new costume."

COMICS MEET THE APPLE

First Comics today announced the forthcoming release of **Shatter**, an unusual approach to comic art storytelling.

"When a new project is initiated, the producers always proclaim 'This is the newest, this is the best, there's never been anything like this done before' " managing editor Mike Gold observed, echoing many of his own press releases both for First Comics and previously for DC Comics. "On this particular occasion, our claim cannot be questioned. Nobody has ever produced and published a comic book like **Shatter**."

The creation of artist Michael Saenz and writer Peter Gillis, **Shatter** is the story of a 21st century policeman in a world where everything is computerized, all jobs are temporary and corporate headhunters take their jobs very seriously.

"What makes **Shatter** truly unique is that the artwork and the lettering is being entirely produced on an Apple Macintosh computer," Gold disclosed. "Mike Saenz is a noted airbrush artist—his work in Marvel's **Epic** and the Warren magazines has brought him a great many fans. But nobody—nobody—is going to expect anything like this."

Shatter will premiere February 28th, 1985 in a limited distribution booklength one-shot special, printed in Baxter format. A short-run eight-page feature in **Jon Sable, Freelance** will begin the same day.

"We are going to get **Shatter** before the widest possible audience," Gold stated. "Our one-shot will be made available to comics readers and to computer enthusiasts alike, but in the eight-page series, we will be proving to comics fans the long-range storytelling capabilities of this medium. We are also going to be bringing a lot of computer and graphic art professionals into the comic book specialty shops." More in perspective, both releases of the company will be made primarily through comic book specialty wholesalers and will not be offered through regular magazine distribution channels.

After all, cops are a consumer market too.
TASTE!
Taste!
Log...
© 1984 FIRST COMICS, INC.
Going on monitors...
GET AWAY FROM ME! STOP! WHAT'RE YOU DOING!? NOOO!
...got something. Looks alive...
It was coming from the Ravenswood Tanks. Giant cisterns that were supposed to have stored the heat for Chicagoland's Great Solar Future, they'd been— what was the word? --reapportioned by the Chicagoland Alien Nation.

An example of the artwork for the new First Comic, Shatter. Note the computer generated artwork.

The First Comics handout explains that, "Utilizing the sophisticated MacPaint and MacDraw software, every aspect of Saenz's work on **Shatter** is being generated on the Apple Macintosh, using the small hand-held "mouse" and the software's capability to access all images on a dot-by-dot basis." Having worked with Mac's big sister Lisa this reporter is aware of the advantages of the computer system and of the currently existing software. Unfortunately he is also aware of the limitations. And it is his humble opinion that the system fails to allow the degree of control to which an artist has normally become ac-

Redecorated, too.
They don't pay me enough to come in here...
EEP EEP
BUY ALIEN
It's always party time in the Tanks.
SHUSHH!
Whoa!
Car: Call for help if I'm not back within twenty minutes and don't let anybody steal you. Now...

This artwork and lettering is produced on a Macintosh computer with MacPaint and MacDraw software.

customed—particularly due to the lack of sensitivity and careful control inherent in the mouse system. The comic book **Shatter** must be judged on the final printed result and while the process by which it is created is certainly novel, it is not of great importance to the reader. What is important is the quality of the resulting product.

For the reader to properly make that judgement we have included several pages of the work kindly supplied by the publisher, First Comics.

(For the reader to better judge the results of the experiment for himself, we have here reproduced two of the pages from the upcoming book, courtesy of the publisher, First Comics.)

STEVE ENGLEHART BACK TO SUPERHEROES

Several years ago Steve Englehart left comic books with the intention of writing The Great American Novel. Previously he had written such major titles as Marvel's Avengers and DC's Justice League of America—the real League featuring DC's frontline characters not the punk rockers who have stolen the title currently. To disappointed comic book readers it seemed that one of the industry's best had deserted for greener pastures. Over the preceding years such luminaries as Gardner Fox, Steve Gerber, Jim Steranko and any number of pencillers had already been lost. But then **Point Man** came out from Dell and while it sold it certainly did not set the world ablaze. Then Englehart began doing comics for some of the smaller publishers including Eclipse, followed by **Coyote** for Epic comics.

Now he has returned to both Marvel and DC and to the superheroes on which he had earned his bones. At Marvel he will be doing both a version of the Avengers and a limited series based on the Vision and the Scarlet Witch, two ex-Avengers. At DC he will be handling the exploits of the Emerald Warrior, the Green Lantern, a character he was quite familiar with from his days on the JLA. It seems like old home week.

The West Coast Avengers, fresh from their four-issue limited series, will receive their own monthly title beginning in 1985, with pencils by Al Milgrom and inks by Joe Sinnott, also **Avengers** alumni. The first issue will see the team attacked unexpectedly by a surprising group of villains, who successfully kidnap Wonder Man and Hank Pym. Simulataneously in **The Vision and the Scarlet Witch** 12-issue limited series(to be pencilled by former **Comics Feature** editor Richard Howell), the Black Talon and Nekra capture the Scarlet Witch in an effort to seize the Vision.

In the crossover, the Vision and the West Coast Avengers join forces,

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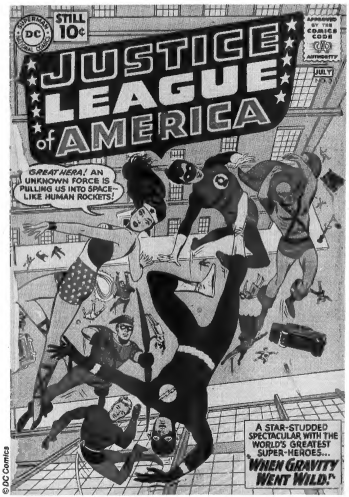
SILVER AGE

THE RETURN OF THE HEROES

BY JACOBS AND JONES

When the Flash won his own magazine in 1959, Julius Schwartz began to get his first inkling that the world might be ready for super-heroes again. But was this really the reopening of a field that most comic book professionals had dismissed as gone forever, or was the Scarlet Speedster's success only a fluke? Five times in the next two years Schwartz would try to answer that question, each time with a modernization of a comic from the Golden Age.


DC
STILL 10¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JULY
JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA
GREAT HERA! AN UNKNOWN FORCE IS PULLING US INTO SPACE—LIKE HUMAN ROCKETS!
A STAR-STUDDED SPECTACULAR WITH THE WORLD'S GREATEST SUPER-HEROES...
WHEN GRAVITY WENT WILD!
©DC Comics

GREEN LANTERN

First it was Green Lantern, in a version departing much further from his inspiration than had Flash. He shared with the Golden Age Green Lantern the concept of a normal man armed with a ring capable of performing miracles; in both the old and new versions the ring was driven by the wearer's own will-power and energized by a sort of green railroad lantern. But the old Green Lantern was a semi-mystical character with an ancient magic lantern. The GL of 1959 drew his powers from a lantern-shaped "power battery" entrusted to him by a dying crimefighter from another world (Show. #22, Oct. 1959).

This cosmic Green Lantern, with his nearly omnipotent power-ring, would become Schwartz's mighty hero, his answer to Superman. The very nature of his power would draw him to far planets, the future and parallel dimensions, leaving the world of Flash and his Rogues far behind.

John Broome was able to draw from a new realm of his imagination in inventing stories for Green Lantern. Foregoing his light-hearted Flash style, he dipped into the mysteries of science, space and time to create menaces that would stretch and challenge the powers of his hero. In GL's second appearance in *Showcase*, for example, the repressed, destructive side of a scientist's imagination springs to independent life as a faceless man, wreaking destruction with atomic weapons, until Green Lantern can exorcise and destroy it (Show. #23, Dec. 1959).

When Green Lantern began in his own magazine in the late spring of 1960 he, and the readers along with him, knew little of his origin and purpose, or the true scope of his powers. Answering the questions surrounding his unique hero in the first nine issues of *Green Lantern* comics, Broome plotted what remains, without question, one of the most impressive multiple-issue sequences in the history of comics.

THE ORIGIN SAGA

It begins in issue 1, when Green Lantern's psyche is swept, bodiless, to the distant planet Oa. There we learn that he is only one of a corps of Green Lanterns, each from a different planet, commanded by a race of telepaths called the Guardians of the Galaxy (GL #1, Aug. 1960). (This was an idea Broome drew directly from his earlier

SEVEN MIGHTY FIGURES SIT SLUMPED IN STUNNED DESPAIR IN THE SECRET SANCTUARY OF THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA...
HE'S ABSOLUTELY INCREDIBLE! NO ONE'S EVER BETRAYED US BEFORE!
I WONDER WHAT VILLAINY HE'S DREAMING UP RIGHT NOW?
©DC Comics

science fiction experience, specifically a story in the *Captain Comet* series he did for Schwartz in the early 1950s, in which Comet is sworn into the service of the cosmic "Guardians".)

In issues 2, 3 and 4 (Oct. 1960-Feb. 1961) the emerald gladiator tangles with the "weaponers" of the dimension of Qward, where crime is the social norm and those who are "unlawfully honest" are punished. In Number 6 (June 1961) GL is summoned by a fellow Green Lantern, a fin-headed, bird-beaked gentleman named Tomar-Re, to a planet of living phantoms. Issue 7 introduces another Green Lantern, the renegade Sinestro, who would become the arch-foe of the Green Lantern of Earth (Aug. 1961).

Issue 9 brings it all to a climax that could put a lump in the throat of a devoted reader: Sinestro teams up with the weaponers of Qward to invade our dimension, and only the combined power of the Guardians and the Green Lantern Corps—replete with intelligent insects, plant-beings, living crystals and bi-pedal fish—can defeat them. The battle won, the entire Corps charges its rings together on the mammoth power battery of Oa, in one stunning full-page drawing (Dec. 1961).

These cosmic spectacles were brought to life by the art of another Schwartz veteran, Gil Kane. Kane had come to the Schwartz stable in the early 1950s as a neat but undistinguished penciller, but during the next several years had begun to work out a style of his own. His early Green Lantern drawings were notable for their compelling story-telling and muscular action, though his work generally looked rushed and undeveloped.

Kane's covers, however, showed his potential. His broad, bold layouts always started from the point of view that would give each scene its most dramatic angle. His characters seemed to fly, leap and stagger right off the covers into the reader's lap. Though not yet the artist Infantino was, Kane's steady improvement promised a bright future. When the future was realized, in the mid-1960s, he would change the look of comic art fundamentally.

HAL JORDAN

Just as novel as Green Lantern's cosmic dimension was the nature of his alter-ego, Hal Jordan. Jordan was no mild-mannered reporter, languid playboy, or infuriatingly slow police scientist in the classic DC mold. He was a dashing, handsome test-pilot whose fearlessness had earned him his career as a superhero.

Paramount in Hal's life were his efforts to woo his curvaceous boss, Carol Ferris of the Ferris Aircraft Company. Carol was a typical Schwartz heroine: Emotional but hardheaded, wanting both an ideal man and a successful career. She reached her most intriguing point in 1962, when a group of inter-dimensional amazons transformed her into the super-villainess Star Sapphire, committed to humiliating Green Lantern and then forcing him to marry her. As she put it, "I seem to be two people. The dominant part of me wants to defeat Green Lantern! The other part wants him to defeat me!" Only Broome would have slipped such an insight into the mouth of a super-villainess (GL 16, Oct. 1962).

Another unusual supporting character was Hal's loyal "Eskimo greasemonkey" Pieface Kalmaku, the only human to share his secret identity. Many plots were built around Hal retelling his adventures for Pieface's Green Lantern Scrapbook, and the presence of a non-super-powered confidante added an extra dimension to the hero.

But Broome's biggest twist on Green Lantern's alter ego was giving him a second one. When a group of scientists far in the future needed a superhero, they yanked Green Lantern

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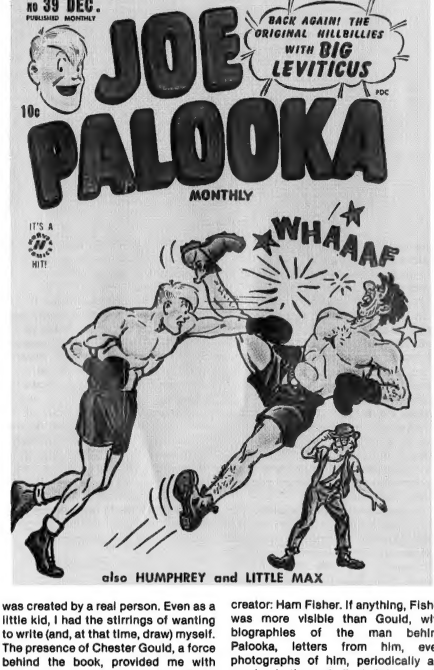
STRIP SEARCH

MAX ALLAN COLLINS

JOE PALOOKA—CHAMPION OF COMICS



As regular readers of this column know by now, I spent much of my childhood reading Dick Tracy comic books published by Harvey Comics. That ritual began around 1954, when Ham Fisher's Joe Palooka was also being published by Harvey in comic book form.

By '54, only a few comic-strip reprint comic books were still around. Just as the super-hero field had dwindled to a hearty handful, so had those comic books reprinting syndicated strips—and Harvey's Tracy and Palooka comics were among the sole survivors. Out of loyalty to Tracy's publisher, I looked to the Harvey line-up of books for something else to buy. Not surprisingly, *Casper the Friendly Ghost* paled next to *Tracy* (although I did regularly buy *Sad Sack*) and, so, I began dutifully buying *Joe Palooka*. Since I could only buy one comic book a week back in 1954 (being six years old with a weekly allowance of ten cents), I not only supported Harvey by *buying Joe Palooka*—I actually *read* it.

And found I really enjoyed it. There was a large, vivid cast of characters, and plenty of action—some of it in the boxing ring, but also in other settings, often exotically foreign, taking all-American Joe and his mixed ethnic cast all over the world. There was also humor, in the form of Brooklyn-bred know-it-all Jerry Ieemy; gentle, massively-overweight hick Humphrey Pennyworth; and the mute shoe-shine boy Little Max. Like the Tracy comic book, the stories were often continued, and cliff-hangars kept me wondering all month what would happen next to this strange, extended family.

Also, like Tracy, there was somebody *behind* Palooka. One of the things I had come to love about Tracy was the presence of a creator—that signature "Chester Gould" on the covers and elsewhere in the comic book. Unlike the largely anonymous original-material comic books of the day, Tracy was created by a real person. Even as a little kid, I had the stirrings of wanting to write (and, at that time, draw) myself. The presence of Chester Gould, a force behind the book, provided me with what I suppose would today be called a "role model".

Likewise, Joe Palooka had *his* creator: Ham Fisher. If anything, Fisher was more visible than Gould, with biographies of the man behind Palooka, letters from him, even photographs of him, periodically appearing in the periodical. (It is no coincidence that among my other favorite comic books of the time were Katy

Keene and Red Ryder—both Bill Woggon and Fred Harmon made their presences felt in their respective books, and in fact made a point of establishing a two-way communication between fans and the characters' creator. Call this egotistical if you will, but it was this approach on which the Marvel empire was built, as Stan Lee turned letter columns and chatty editorials into a way of comics life.)

Dick Tracy did not run in my daily paper; Joe Palooka, however, did—and I followed Fisher's fighter daily (and Sunday), in addition to monthly via Harvey Comics. While Palooka never usurped Tracy's position in my young heart, he settled in comfortably into second-place (among much competition).

Then, in 1955, while I was visiting with grandparents over Christmas, spread-eagle on the floor reading a Palooka comic book, I heard a newscast mention Ham Fisher's name. I looked up at the TV and listened close: Joe Palook's creator, Ham Fisher, was dead.

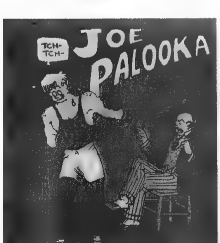
Suicide.

I was seven years old, but I knew what suicide was (I read Dick Tracy, remember?). But I didn't know how to connect it to real life. And I certainly didn't understand how the creator of the modest, optimistic Palooka could do such a thing. It was also my first real contact with death, and it was disturbing.

And I remember looking at the comic book and wondering if this meant Joe Palooka had died, too.

In a way, Joe Palooka (and the strip that bore his name) did die with Fisher. It continued on for many years and, the last time I looked, was running still.

But Fisher was one of those unique figures in the history of comic strips, one of those larger-than-life creators who could not be replaced; whose vision was so special-unto-itself that no "ghost" could hope to recapture what had come quite naturally to the creator. Among these greats are Walt Kelly, George Herriman, Milton Caniff



and Charles Schulz. Probably two others should be listed, too, but I'm attempting to prove that theory wrong about one of them (Chester Gould) and perhaps out of respect to Fisher should not mention the other (Al Capp).

Among the many ironies of Fisher's death—and the subsequent decline of a great, vastly popular strip—is his reputation for being heavily assisted—even for being completely ghosted. Insiders in the comics industry—egged on by former Fisher assistant Capp, whose bitter feud with his one-time employer figured in the latter's suicide—came to believe that Fisher was a mere figurehead, a hustler who hired others to do everything from border the panels to write the dialogue.

Such rumors are common in comics. Bob Kane and Alfred Andriola are two others who, probably unfairly, have been accused of having done little (some would claim *no*) actual drawing or writing. H.C. "Bud" Fisher is widely believed to have left Mutt and Jeff to assistants, having once achieved a wide success (though others feel he did continue to *write* it, for a good while). Comic-book fans may recall an Al Williamson/Archie Goodwin story in *Eerie* (or was it *Creepy*?) some years ago, in which a cartoonist hired, independently, various ill-paid but highly talented assistants to do each and every aspect of his work—penciller, letterer, inker, writer; after he kills them off, they (in true horror-comic form) return from the grave to take their revenge on him.

And perhaps these rumors of nonactive "creators" are just the natural revenge of any "ghost". The nameless assistants who help creators maintain the brutal weekly schedule of a syndicated strip often come to feel that *they* are doing the work, while the "creator" simply luxuriates in the wealth generated by said assistant's toil

There is, of course, some truth in that. Some. And perhaps an examination of Ham Fisher—the most notorious and maligned of such overly-assisted creators—will show both sides of the story.

Fisher was born in 1900 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. He was a comic-strip buff from the age of five and by seven wanted to be a cartoonist when he grew up. Working hard throughout his teen years to develop that craft, by age nineteen he landed an editorial/sports cartooning post at a local paper. By 1920 he had a formative version of Palooka he was showing to (and getting rejected by) the newspaper syndicates. In 1927 he was in New York, working in the advertising department of the Daily News, showing Palooka around in his spare time.

How Fisher came to create Palooka, exactly, is hard to say—because we only have his word for it, as to how it went; and since Fisher was an outrageous self-promoter, the story may be "baloney", as they used to say in the funnies. But here it is, anyway, as a late-'40s syndicate news release puts it: "Fisher first got his idea for Joe Palooka while talking to a prize fighter in his home town. This exponent of the art of scrambling mugs was a good natured fellow but a wildcat in the ring. One thing stood out about him. He disliked fighting but found it the best way to support his orphaned brothers and sisters. As Ham stood talking to him in front of a local pool room, the

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Games

BY STEVE PERRIN

This time around I will deal with a common problem of superhero games. And a lot of news. This is also as good a time as any to say that I will respond to questions and suggestions made to me through letters sent to me.

THE BALANCED GAME:

KEEPING EVERYONE INVOLVED

Role playing game designers usually spend a lot of time trying to "balance" the game. No matter what approach to the game a player has, his character must not be weak and ineffectual in play, whatever the adventure involves.

This can be an unachievable chimera. It is doubly so when trying to simulate the general comic-book universe. The longest-running superhero team in history, Superman and Batman is a case in point. Superman is incredibly powerful and Batman only an improved normal man. They succed in a comic book because the writer usually ignores Superman's super-brain and lets Batman carry the intellectual ball while Superman supplies the muscle. Their team stories often send them on two different trails, only to meet at the end for the denouement. It's a workable plot gimmick, but very hard to simulate in a roleplaying game.

No matter what tricks game designers use to keep characters relatively balanced, there is no way to model the "real" world of comics and maintain balance in the game system. The range of powers is just too wide. As an industry-wide reaction to this difficulty, there is no game on the market (with the hopeful exception of the upcoming DC Heroes game) which can easily create Superman. We shudder to imagine what such a powerful character would do to anyone else in the game, and avoid the possibility of his appearance.

But this limit on power levels does not eliminate the differences in power that still appear. What does the poor gamemaster do when he is confronted by a playing group which consists of two Wolverine clones, a Daredevil type, an Iron Man takeoff and a solar-powered energy projector who glows in the dark? A detective scenario will leave the armor-suited hero and the energy projector twiddling their thumbs A punchout that can challenge the armored marvel and the solar hero may leave the pseudo-Daredevil and Wolverine cubs in shreds on the ground. No matter how you handle it, someone is bound to be doing nothing while someone else is playing. This is not a good group dynamic.

CHAMPIONS
THE SUPER ROLE-PLAYING GAME!™
BY GEORGE MACDONALD AND STEVE PETERSON
BE A HERO!
GAME S
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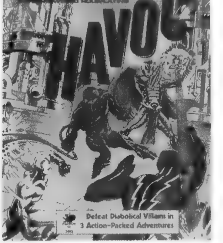
There are several solutions. The simplest and least adequate limits the game to characters who are at the same power level and have similar abilities. In this way *everyone* must either have or not have the appropriate powers and skills to handle whatever scenario the gamemaster tosses in. This degenerates into the ongoing adventures of the Legion of Super-

Clones. This is usually boring, though no campaign is boring if the gamemaster knows his business.

Another solution is harder on the gamemaster but more satisfying to the players. The gamemaster must either devise one plot with many different threads which will involve heroes who need different superpowers and/or skills to follow their thread or devise separate plots that involve the appropriate heroes in the plot that utilizes his abilities. Once the heroes are involved, the gamemasterr must jump from one to another, keeping each involved and bringing him to a crisis point, then leaving him to bring another hero or team of heroes to a similar point. This is the usual system for the Superman - Batman team, and for several other comicbook superteams with characters who have different levels of power. This system burdens players with periods of inactivity, but interest should be maintained both through anxious waiting for the next twist in the plot and by following the misadventures of their compatriots.

The third alternative is to cheat, just as the comic writers do. If the team is unbalanced and they run into a menace only the strongest can fight, make sure the menace only attacks the strongest. Keep the dice roll a secret and tell the players what happened based on the capabilities of the heroes to take punishment, not the actual points rolled. This can be esthetically unsatisfying, but sometimes it is necessary after the gamemaster has been painted into a corner. Either his own misplotting or some brilliant piece of player inspiration can allow the detectives to bypass five steps of the investigation and arrive at the secret headquarters before the powerhouses have managed to take out all guardians.

A final alternative (though there are others I have not touched on) is simply to let the heroes be outclassed. A truly entertaining gamemaster can afford to do this because he will manage to



make the players who are left out of the action enjoy watching the game, just as they would enjoy reading a comic book. The heroes should have an opportunity to use their skills at some point in the scenario. But if the detectives must do all the investigating at the first while the powerhouses twiddle thier thumbs, and the powerhouses must do all the work at the end while the detectives lie unconscious, then so be it - and hope everyone enjoys the story.

SUPERHERO TIE-INS

FGU has struck deals with Will Meugniot of DNAgents and with Deluxe Comics, publishers of THUNDER Agents, to publish *Villains and Vigilantes* modules based on both groups of characters. Of course, my information from other sources says that Meugniot has not been talking with partner Mark Evanier and Eclipse Comics, both of whom hold an interest in the DNAgents and must have a say in what is done. Publication for the game modules is set for some time after the first of the year.

As of this writing, and despite the ads which herald its earlier arrival, the DC Heroes game is actually just due out. However, developer Greg Gordon was good enough to provide a copy of the manuscript for my perusal.

My basic feeling is that it is too complex for its target market. The designer has attempted to ignore the common game jargon of "roll-to-hit" and "damage-done", by substituting terminology such as "action checks" and "result checks". This language does cover more ground than the combat-oriented terms found in most games and it might work with new gamers if it is explained properly.

Unfortunately, the writing in the manuscript is not clear. Jargon is used before it is defined and there is the common veteran-gamer failing of too much use of inobvious abbreviations. Also, the game system attempts to use Attribute Points(abbreviated APs) for too many different functions. Damage is expressed in APs done, rather than specific references to the attribute damaged. Success in any activity is also expressed in APs which must then be translated into effect units. Experienced players will find the new release no improvement on the more generic superhero games now out on the market. Newcomers will be put off by its complexity.

The licensed tie-in will help *DC Heroes* initially, but the game will continue to sell only if the support materials are good and give proper insights into the characters. The consumer will probably buy it more for the information on the DC world than the game material.

Dave Arneson (co-creator of *D&D*) has been signed up to do a Green Arrow module while Ray Greer, Hero Games honcho and my predecessor on this column, is lined up to do an Atom module. Jerry Epperson, a former TSR employee, is doing the JLA module(although which version of the team is not specified). Many of my personal favorites are still out there to be grabbed. Get to work, free-lancers!

In my next column, I intend to take an in-depth look at Palladium Books Heroes Unlimited *and the Marvel Heroes miniatures. There should be some room for reviews of other miniatures and a look at the revamped* Supergame. Remember, I do requests, so let's see those cards and letters rolling in. Until then, keep 'em flying.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Chaosium, Inc., P.O. Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706
Fantasy Games Unlimited, P.O. Box 182, Roslyn, NY 11576
Mayfair Games, Inc., P.O. Box 5987, Chicago, IL 60680

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

By Ron Goulart

ODDS AND ENDS PART ONE

This time, as a brief respite from the histories of longlasting and successful titles brought forth by major publishers, we'll take a look at some of the shortlived titles that failed to flourish in the boom years of the Golden Age. Magazines that hit the stands with high hopes, only to flop and fade away after a few months.

VICTORY

Although you'd expect a magazine with a title like *Victory Comics* to be a winner, such was not the case. The first title put forth by Hillman Periodicals *Victory* lasted just four issues before conceding defeat. The first one had a cover date of August, 1941 and offered "10 New Smashing War-Action Features". Among the new heroes were a Marine, a secret agent, a submarine commander, a cloaked mystery man and a costumed superhero. Since the contents of the magazine were produced by Lloyd Jacquet's Funnies, Inc. shop, *Victory* resembled both *Marvel Mystery Comics* and *Target Comics*. But not quite closely enough.

The star of the fledgling comic was a fellow who wore a snappy red, white and blue uniform and called himself the Conqueror. His debut adventure was written and drawn by Bill Everett, who also provided the explosive, action packed cover. The initial story was set in a mythical European country that had Hitler's mechanized hordes "poised on the border...awaiting the order to continue on." The Conqueror, working with the reluctant co-operation of a blonde lady who may or may not be a Nazi agent, thwarts an attempt to assassinate the country's premier. While the twelve page episode is well done, it's more realistic than Everett's usual stuff and lacks the flamboyant

THE CONQUEROR HURLS HIS LAST GRENADE RIGHT INTO THE PLANES NOSE!
AND- AS THE PLANE EXPLODES, HE RAISES BACK UP THE RIVER -
SAFE ENOUGH HERE!
MEANWHILE
DONNERWETTER! THAT CONQUEROR AGAIN! GET HIM! GET HIM! SAVE!
WELL - THAT OUGHT TO STALL THINGS UNTIL ENGLAND CAN SEND HELP. SO -
BACK IN TOWN-
NAZI'S HERE ALL "RAPPED GOOD!
AGAIN YOU'VE DONE IT, CONQUEROR NOW WE HAVE A CHANCE!
YES AND I THINK YOU'LL MAKE GOOD USE OF IT!
MEANWHILE - I'VE GOT ANOTHER JOB TO DO - GET HITLER. SO - SO LONG - UNTIL LATER.
HITLER WANTS THE CONQUEROR, AND THE CONQUEROR WANTS HITLER- MAYBE WE CAN ACCOMODATE THEM BOTH IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF VICTORY.

Sergeant Flagg
of the U.S. MARINES
in
Burned Down By Fire
THE SEETHING CHAOS THAT IS WAR-TORN CHINA, A HANDFUL OF DARESDEVIL U.S. MARINES GUARD THE LIVES AND PROPERTY OF AMERICAN CITIZENS. A HOT SPOT—AND HOTTER STILL WHEN MURDER REARS ITS UGLY HEAD INSIDE THE WALLS!
Story—Joseph Piazza
Art—Emil Gershwin

wackiness of his Sub-Mariner. Harry Anderson took over the art chores with the second issue. At the end of the fourth and final yarn we see the hero setting off, on foot, for Berlin. "He has sworn to kill ADOLPH HITLER," reminds the last caption. "Will he finally meet him?"

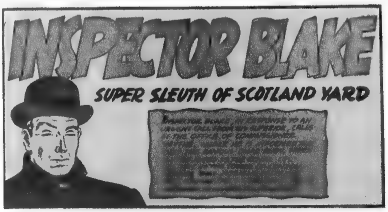
Those who wanted to know how the Conqueror came to be had to read the text stories that appeared at the center of the first and second issues. Therein you learned that, after a plane crash in the Rockies, he found his way to the isolated laboratory of Professor James Norton. When he collapses, the professor revives him with his own special ray machinery. "It's very simple. I've been feeding you with juices energized by cosmic rays. I've been baking your body with my special cosmic ray lamp. See it there? Your body has been absorbing the energy of the ray. Your metabolism has increased tremendously already. You'll find, once you're up and about—which should be tomorrow—that you will have improved a hundred percent, both physically and mentally!"

The rest of the *Victory* crew were all certifiable second bananas. Bomber Burns dressed up in a crimson costume and plagued the Nazis in a crimson P-38 dubbed the Firebrand. From artist-writer Harry Francis Campbell came a secret agent "known only as Spade. This mysterious secret service man is the personal agent of the president! Master of all the tricks, this man of a hundred faces is the most feared of our spy hunters." The Crusader was drawn by George Mandel, who also served a stint with the Angel over at *Marvel*. This hero wore a cloak and a slouch hat and specialized in combatting the weirder sort of spies and saboteurs—crazed hypnotists, human vampires, etc. A not too exciting strip titled Sergeant Flagg of the U.S. Marines is interesting because it's one of the few features ever signed by the elusive Emil Gershwin. Working in a personal variation of the Alex Raymond style, Gershwin later drew both Spy Smasher and Starman. He never bothered to attach his name to either.

BANG-UP

Unlike most comic books, *Bang-Up* had its editorial offices in Chicago and recruited contributors from that area. Mostly, the less-than-successful magazine utilized artists and writers who were working on syndicated newspaper strips. Rick Yager, who was then ghosting the *Buck Rogers* Sunday page, drew "Buzz" Balmer; Ken Ernst, ghost on *Don Winslow*, turned out "Rick" Masters; Jack Ryan, one of the *Dick Tracy* assistants, did Lady Fairplay. Also to be found in *Bang-Up Comics* were Adventure, Incorporated and Jeff Barter, both team efforts of John Olson and Ed Moore. Moore, who'd been an assistant on *Dan Dunn* and *Don Winslow*, was doing a Sunday page, titled *Captain Storm*, for the Chicago *Tribune*'s comic book insert. Olson later drew a Sunday page, *John West*, for the *Trib* before going on to spend many years as assistant on *Brenda Starr*. For sf buffs there was Cosmo Mann, "Super Sleuth of the Scientific World," illustrated by Leon Gordon. Gordon drew the *Skyroads* strip during its last days.

Yager's contribution was a science fiction feature with a contemporary setting. Professor Balmer is testing his new minus-beam, a ray that'll shrink things down to teenie weenie size, when his son "Buzz" accidentally steps in front of it. Since the effect can't be reversed, "Buzz" is destined to remain about the size of Doll Man from then on. Always conscious of my own lack of stature, I'd have been worried about how I was going to meet any women my own size. "Buzz", though is only concerned about the airplane he's



just won. "If I could only keep on flying, I wouldn't care WHAT size I was," he tells his dad. The obliging professor shrinks the plane. "Buzz" is next recruited by Army Intelligence and flies to wartorn Europe, where he shrinks Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. "Hah! Troublemakers aren't very dangerous when they're no bigger than peanuts!" In his last adventure he takes a job doing publicity for a Texas oil company.

Ken Ernst provided the best looking and best written strip in the magazine. His Rick Masters is a foreign correspondent, tangled in political intrigue in a mythical European country. Jack Ryan's Lady Fairplay was a superheroine and she entered comics just about the same time as Wonder Woman. Yet, despite having "unlimited energetic powers" and being "gorgeous", she did not fare as well. Lady F never had a full-fledged origin, but we are told in an opening caption that a brilliant scientist named Professor Amazo transformed her into a "slim beautiful creature with amazing superpowers". By day she is bespectacled school teacher Mary Lee. But when trouble rears its head she swiftly converts to a "goddess of chastisement and dreaded foe of the underworld." Since she doesn't possess the ability to fly, the lady travels to and from crime scenes in a red convertible. This sleek special vehicle was built by the helpful professor and "is equipped with everything but the kitchen sink!" The three cases she tackles are mundane. The first involves bank robbers, the second a crooked home for the aged and the last a hot car ring.

Ed Moore once told me that the outfit behind *Bang-Up*, Progessive Publishers, Inc., had no previous experience in the comic book business. This enabled Moore and his colleagues to convince them that the going page rates in the field were twice as high as they actually were. Perhaps this higher rate put too much stress on Progressive. Whatever the reason, the magazine ceased to be with the issue dated June, 1942.

WHIRLWIND

Whirlwind Comics blew onto the scene in the spring of 1940, lasting all of three issues. The contents were provided by a shop run by Bert Whitman and he looks to be the artist responsible for the leadoff hero, the Cyclone. Whitman was determined to pump as much wind into the feature as possible. He describes his costumed crimefighter thusly—"Peter Blake is THE CYCLONE! For years he has trained himself in Jiu-Jitsu, athletics and circus acrobats (*sic*) until he can strike at crime with all the fury of a hurricane and the force of a tornado!" Despite all that Cyclone is a dull chap. So are his adventures, which ran as long as twenty pages.

Most of the rest of the *Whirlwind* gang were lacklustre and they tended to have alliterative names. There were Bruce Barlow, billed as "Conqueror of the Planets, Rex Royce, a two-fisted Canadian Mountie, Snapper Smith, a crack newspaper photographer. In addition you got Smash Dawson, a reporter who battled the Magic Mandarin, a sinister Oriental "who was sworn to annihilate the white race from the face of the Earth," Rick Blaze, a college jock with the distinction of being a "five letter man at Yardley" (except in #2, where he was only a four letter man) and Inspector Blake, the Super Sleuth of Scotland Yard. The best feature, though not something that was going to boost sales, was Scoop Hanlon. Just another ace reporter strip, it was enlivened by the quirky artwork of George Storm. Among the other artists who labored in the Bert Whitman vineyard were Henry Boltinoff, Dan Gormley and Hal Sharp.

The main thing wrong with *Whirlwind* was that it was too obviously turned out without much thought as to what comic books were all about. Sixty-four pages got filled, yet there was no evidence of imagination or even an effort to ape what was proving successful for DC, Timely and Fawcett. Jumping on bandwagons can be lucrative, but you have to be smart about it.

Next time, unless we go bonkers contemplating the research, we'll probably examine a few more of the turkeys of yesteryear.

A SIGNING SESSION WITH

DON HECK

BY JOHN PEEL

Everyone has their favorites, and when I think of my favorite comic book artists, the list is small—John Buscema, Neal Adams, Joe Staton—and Don Heck. So when I learned that Don Heck would be at my local comic book store to autograph work, how could I resist? Especially since I had never seen how these kind of autograph sessions could work. I wasn't even sure I could get a good interview under those conditions, but I was determined to try!

Sometimes when you meet a man you've always admired the work of, you are disappointed. Thankfully, with Don Heck, the reverse was true. Happy, friendly and energetic, he was a pleasure to talk to and to watch in action. Autographing, showing his past work or drawing small sketches for the fans, but he kept up a barrage of conversation, frequently punctuated by grins and laughter.

A good friend of another of my favorites, John Buscema (he lectured from time to time at John's art school), he is fond of telling stories. "I understand it's entirely different over in Europe," he said at one point. "John was invited over to France once. You wouldn't believe the reception. Over here, we're the garbage, but over there it's a whole different thing."

AND ON CIRCE'S ISLAND...
THIS CREATURE IS REALLY A MAN...CIRCE'S PUPPET!
GOT TO KEEP THOSE CLAWS AWAY FROM ME--
--TILL I CAN DISABLE HIM WITHOUT MAIMING HIM TOO BADLY!
© DC Comics

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? THAT ALIEN'S NOT EVEN REAL! HE'S JUST A BIG...STUFFED TOY!
...SO we put him to GOOD USE...
Oh, he's real! He's just been--SINCE--minus LIFE SUPPORT for several of your decades...
...what you might call a... "SCARECROW"!
©DC Comics

ORIGINS

How did he begin in comics? "I've done thousands of stories at least," he said. "I've been in the business since 1952. I started on *Horrific* and *Danger*, and I also worked on *Death Valley*. I did the covers, and they also let me do the lettering on *Horrific*—like the logo." From there he moved on to what would become Marvel Comics, and worked on the horror and mystery tales that were current then. I mentioned that a number of these were still being reprinted in England, in Marvel's English line. "Yeah? I only wish we got the money when they print them over there in England. We don't get anything from that. We do when they reprint them over here, though."

With the advent of the super-hero at Marvel, Don came into his own. "I did the first issue of *Iron Man*," he said. That was *Tales of Suspense #39*. "They have it listed that Jack Kirby did the breakdowns, but that's not true. I did it all. They just didn't bother to call me up and find out when they wrote up the credits. It doesn't really matter. Jack Kirby created the costume, and he did the cover for the issue. In fact the second costume, the red and yellow one, was designed by Steve Ditko. I found it easier than drawing that bulky old thing. The earlier design, the robot-looking one, was more Kirbyish."

He finds it hard to believe the veneration with which the old comics are treated. "I've got a couple of books, like *Journey Into Mystery #83*, and it's a book that I would normally just toss out. Then I read in Overstreet's that it's worth $80-$100! I can't believe it, you know. Well, it's the first time that Thor was introduced. The magazine, as far as I'm concerned, is not that good, but it's worth $80 because it's Thor's introduction.

"I like an interesting story, really. I don't read comics myself. I just look at the characters drawn by somebody. That's all." He laughed. "The stuff comes in, I do it, I send it out again."

He is a little amused at the success of *Iron Man* and other magazines that he used to work on. "I used to work on *Iron Man* and *The Avengers*. I'm sure that it can't be half as disappointing nowadays for the guys that are doing that as it was for us. We never got a percentage of the sales. I wish they'd done this royalty thing years ago, so I did get a percentage. But years ago DC was selling twice the number that Marvel was. Now it's turned around."

One of the fans asked him if there was any Marvel book he hadn't worked on. He thought about that for a moment. "*Fantastic Four*. I did one or two panels of it, but that's about the only one." The boy asked about *The New X-Men*. "No, I never drew those. I was out of Marvel at that point. I can't even recall the last issue of *X-Men* that I drew.

"I left Marvel for a change of pace," he added. "I kept getting all the new inkers. Everyone who walked in, I got them. A bad inker can kill artwork. I once got some pages back from inking, and I just tore them up, that's how bad they were."

We talked about styles, and how his was instantly recognisable, whilst many of the newer artists look alike. "Jack Kirby used to say—back at Marvel in 1963—that we all were different," he agreed. "It's much better to have totally different styles. Years ago, DC was like you mentioned—they all had so close a style that you couldn't tell who did the drawings.

"That was mostly deliberate, you know. You know what they were afraid of? That all of a sudden you would be going—someone was going to steal you. All they ever had to do was to pick

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60

HEROES

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®

It was the dawn of the Marvel Age and the birth of the one character who would come to symbolize Marvel Comics more than any other.

If one had to pick the quintessential hero of the Sixties, it would be Spider-Man. Peter Parker, with his turbulent life and his constant introspection and self-doubts, captured what the country itself would be going through in the Sixties. The fact that the approach to his character predated the youthful turbulance of those years merely meant that the young readers of the comic found someone who reflected their own anxieties. Peter Parker put into words what many of his readers could not articulate--the turbulance of growing up and attempting to grapple with often cruel realities.

While the hero/villain was by no means new, Spider-Man was a different breed. Whereas characters like The Spider and The Green Hornet were sought by the police while they battled crime, those characters never agonized over the cruelties of that dichotomy the way Spider-Man did. They never tried to turn the public awareness of them around, but to no avail, the way Spider-Man did. They went about their business while Spider-Man cursed a cruel and often remorseless fate.

While created by Stan Lee, there were other hands who shaped him and made him unique in the Marvel stable of heroes.

Even while Marvel was introducing their unique brand of super-hero to the comic book scene, they were still publishing many of the same kinds of books they had been producing for years. Namely weird fantasy comics. These included *Journey into Mystery*, Tales to Astonish, Tales of Suspense and what was then a more recent addition to the lineup, *Amazing Adult Fantasy*. The earliest issues of this short-lived title had included a pre-Doctor Strange fantasy hero named Dr. Droom (retitled Dr. Druid in reprint form 15 years later). But for the most part it featured weird adventure stories by Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. In fact, within a short time, Ditko was drawing all of the stories and to fine effect. Late in its short life the title was changed from *Amazing Adult Fantasy* to *Amazing Fantasy*. The *Twilight Zone* style morality tale was still emphasized though. But then, no one could communicate pathos better than Steve Ditko. The fifteenth and final issue of this title introduced Spider-Man.

The Jack Kirby cover is probably one of the most recognizable in comics and homage was paid to it on *Spider-Man* #252 when the short-lived but popular all black Spidey uniform made its premiere.

In *Origins of Marvel Comics*, Stan Lee recalled the creation of this soon to be star of the Marvel universe. "For quite a while I'd been toying with the idea of doing a strip that would violate all the conventions--break all the rules. A strip that would actually feature a teenager as the star, instead of making him an (ugh!) adult hero's sidekick. A strip in which the main character would lose out as often as he'd win—in fact, more often. A strip in which nothing would progress according to formula--the situations, the cast of characters and their relationship to each other would all be unusual and unexpected. Yep, I knew what I wanted all right, but where would I ever get a chance to try

©Marvel Comics Group

it? Where--except in a magazine that we were planning to kill anyway?

"What about the name?" Lee continued. "Why Spider-Man? Simple. In the long dead, practically Paleolithic era when I had been on the verge of approaching teenagerhood, one of my favorite pulp magazine heroes was a stalwart named The Spider. He wore a slouch hat and a finger ring with the image of an arachnid--a ring which, when he punched a foe fearlessly in the face, would leave its mark, and impression of a spider. It was The Spider's calling card, and it sent goose pimples up and down my ten-year old spine. More that that, I can still remember how the magazine' subtitle grabbed me. It was called *The Spider*--but after his name were the never-to-be-forgotten words: *Master of Men*. Just to play with that for a moment--roll it around on your tongue, savor the fateful, fascinating flavor--*The Spider, Master of Men*. My mind was made up, the stage was set, the cards had been dealt. I was no more than a puppet in the shadow show of destiny."

Lee discussed the idea with his publisher, Martin Goodman, but Goodman pointed out that most people didn't like spiders. Lee explained about how he'd loved the old *Spider* pulp magazine in his youth and hoped to infuse the strip with the same sort of reader enthusiasm.

Lee approached Jack Kirby to do the strip. That was only proper as Kirby was a natural for super-heroes and had already been carrying off The Fantastic Four and The Hulk quite successfully. Lee explained that he wanted Spider-Man to look less heroic, like a normal person wearing a costume, not the handsome or graceful square-jawed hero he was accustomed to doing. Kirby took the assignment but Lee was unhappy with the initial pages. Kirby just could not deglamorize the concept enough. So while Kirby had designed the costume (and thus the cover as well), the strip was then turned over to Steve Ditko.

Ditko had not exactly been known for super-heroes up to this point. In fact

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from his first work in comics in 1955 up to doing Spider-Man in 1963, he had almost exclusively drawn mystery and science fiction stories. Super-heroes are something else again. But then Lee didn't want this to be a standard hero by any stretch of the imagination. What Ditko gave him was pure magic.

"After Spidey's premiere appearance in *Amazing Fantasy* #15," Lee recalled, "the book was dropped and we all forgot about it. I'd gotten the Spider-Man character out of my system and could now go back to our other superstars."

But then the sales reports came in. The book had been a best seller and Spider-Man had to be the reason. Lee met with Martin Goodman and the character was given a rebirth in its own magazine.

The things which Ditko did with this title which made it great are the same things which alienated some people then, and apparently a lot of newer fans now (the Ditko reprints of those classics are not met with enthusiasm by the modern, young collector. This isn't the Spider-Man they know. It's too different. It looks "old". The art is ugly. Why isn't it by John Byrne? Most of the newer fans probably didn't even realize that *Spider-Man Annual* #18 is, in pacing and layout, identical in approach to a Ditko Spider-Man. Even the art is a clear homage to Ditko, albeit with the slick sheen the Eighties fan comes to expect in a Marvel comic.)

What Ditko did was draw Spider-Man so that it wasn't larger than life. In fact it often seemed uncomfortably close to life. New York was never gloomier or grittier than when drawn by Diko, but for anyone who knows New York, that's what it's like. These characters lived in a real world. Each panel didn't glitter with some slick new look such as Kirby gave his books. But then this was only right. The Fantastic Four were wealthy. Peter Parker lived with his aunt.

In the origin story and in the early issues of the magazine, Peter Parker was an ordinary looking high school student. He was a bookworm with geeky glasses. But by page three he'd been bitten by a radioactive spider and in no time flat he'd made his own costume and even invented his web-shooters and web fluid. In 11 pages he'd achieved fame but lost his Uncle Ben to a hood he could have stopped if his sudden fame hadn't made him too arrogant to want to bother. Thus was born a hero driven by a guilt he could never expunge. His uncle would not have died had he acted when he had the chance. (This element came full circle in *Spider-Man* #200 when the burglar finally died, frightened into a heart attack by his fear of Spider-Man).

While there are many true-blue fans who go back and reread the first 38 issues and the first two annuals with great fondness, I daresay that most of today's readers of Spider-Man find little to relate to in those Steve Ditko issues. This is because Ditko was a different kind of artist to have picked for this book, and he delivered something unique. Look at Spider-Man today. It is virtually indistinguishable from the rest of the comics on the newsstand. This is because Spider-Man is successful and one doesn't mess with sucess. So when Steve Ditko left the book he was replaced by John Romita, who is not exactly mister originality in his approach to art. He is a slick, competent but unexciting craftsman and the book has been drawn by many of those over the intervening years. But that's not what established Spider-Man.

Steve Ditko's art (as well as his plotting and a lot of uncredited writing) drew us into the world of Peter Parker and the rest. Its earthy, straightforward approach, along with the stories, made it a strip much easier to identify with than any other being done. Other comics may have been flashier and prettier, but Spider-Man was more real.

With the first issue of his regular magazine, Marvel made Spider-Man something apart. Lee succeeded in making Spider-Man someone who tried to do his best, only to see things turn out wrong. J. Jonah Jameson immediately branded Spider-Man a menace when all he was doing was appearing as a performer, thus ruining his income. When Spidey saved Jonah's astronaut son, he was branded a criminal who had staged the whole incident. When he fought the Chameleon, who had committed a crime disguised as Spider-Man, he found himself having to escape the police when they believed him to be the Chameleon as well. At the conclusion of the story we see a young man who had failed and who was at the bottom of the heap even though he had powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men. He'd even spent the whole issue trying to earn money to help his aunt pay their rent, but without a single success. We were left wondering what kind of a hero Spider-Man was going to be if he was hounded, branded a menace and driven by desperation. Parker had already imagined the possibilities open to him should he turn his powers to crime. When had a hero even entertained the possibility before? The future was wide open.

While today there have been hundreds of Spider-Man stories exploring and re-exploring all of the plots possible with the character, at that time there were no limits. We couldn't read a story and say, "Well, this is only the third time he's done this. Hohum..." Each issue had an atmosphere of exploration and discovery. Would Spider-Man be pushed over the edge? Wouldn' we in the same circumstances? While readers may have imagined themselves as the Human Torch or The Flash, Peter Parker's life was uncomfortably close to home; his worries uncomfortabley close to ours.

Even then some fans found Ditko's art crude because when had they ever seen a "realistic" super-hero strip? The

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SUPER

THE LANGUAGE THAT

"I think Kirby is the absolute master of the comic book as an art form itself. Kirby is the one who defines what a comic book is. It's one of those things that you can't put into words. You have to say, 'Here's a Kirby comic. Here's Kirby at his best. That's what a comic book is all about."

JOHN BYRNE

"I was in a flood of people who were coming in who were raised on Jack Kirby. There were dozens of others. Steranko came in that way, Smith, myself—I could go on...."

JIM STARLIN

A story is told about President Jack Kennedy. It is said that he once addressed an assemblage of former Nobel Prize winners in the following way: Today we have gathered the greatest assemblage of human intelligence ever gathered here in the White House dining room with one exception—that is when Thomas Jefferson dined alone.

In his own way, in his own realm, that too can be said about Jack Kirby. What has become an industry truism is that comic books have a language and that language is called Kirby. Fortyfive years ago, along with Joe Simon, Jack Kirby created one of the most enduring and most copied four-color heroes of all time: Captain America. But that wasn't enough for them and the duo, after crafting literally dozens of superheroes, crime dramas and kid gang comics, produced what many consider to be the highest achievement ever reached in the medium, *Boys Ranch*. Then they singlehandedly created the genre of romance comics with stories that remain unsurpassed. Then after working on such diverse projects as *Black Magic* and *Challengers of the Unknown*, the team broke up. And Jack Kirby's second career began.

At the helm of Marvel in 1960, he, along with Stan Lee, was in on the creation of virtually all of the major characters which revitalized the line—The Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Thor, The Hulk, the X-Men and the rest. He filled the Marvel pantheon with more characters than any other single talent in the company's history(Galactus, The Black Panther, Silver Surfer, the Inhumans, Dr. Doom—the number seems endless). And then he went on to create the New Gods for D.C. Then back to Marvel for the Eternals, on to Pacific Comics for Captain Victory and Silver Star and now The Hunger Dogs for D.C.

Born Jack Kurtzburg on August 28, 1917, he went on to become Jack Kirby, the largest single influence on comics, and especially the superhero, in the past forty years. Homage has been paid to him by today's hot young talents countless times for without him some of those talents never would have been inspired by the action and creativity inherent in the form.

In the November 1983 issue of *The Golden Age of Comics*, I interviewed Jack about his first decade in the business. A year later I spoke with him again.

AT MARVEL:
SUPERSTAR OF THE SIXTIES

Jack Kirby was clearly a major influence at Marvel, both in the very late Fifties and throughout the Sixties. Atlas/Marvel had been publishing a plethora of mystery books in the Fifties such as *Strange Tales*, *Journey Into Mystery* and many others which had already gone by the wayside by the late Fifties. The stories in them were thin and except for occasional contributions by such artists as Wally Wood, Al Williamson, Reed Crandall, John Severin and other former E.C. alumni, the art was uniformly forgettable. But then entered Jack Kirby with some new approaches and new ideas. His description of those days differs remarkably from anything found in the *Origin of Marvel Comics*.

HEROES

JACK KIRBY WROTE

BY JAMES VAN HISE

THE FANTASTIC FOUR MEET THE MOLE MAN!
AND NOW WHAT'S NEXT FOR OUR FOUR AMAZING ADVENTURERS, LET'S SEE WHAT'S ON OUR TABLE
PICTURES?
WHAT ARE THEY, PIN-UPS?
LOOK! A LOT OF SPELL THAT LOOKS LIKE AN ALTAR! IS ANYBODY HURT? THE DOOR IS STILL IN ONE PIECE!
WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
©Marvel Comics Group

"When I came up to Marvel in the late Fifties, they were just about to close up, that very afternoon! I told them not to do it. Marvel is a case of survival. I guaranteed them that I'd sell their magazines, and I did. I did the monster stories or whatever they had and they began to liven up a bit.

"I knew that they were lacking superheroes. Nobody had really done many in many a year. After the war the superheroes kind of faded, but of course, after a certain amount of time it was time to bring them back. So I brought back the superheroes. The Fantastic Four is mine. Spider-Man is mine. The Hulk is mine. They're all mine. I couldn't handle Spider-Man because I was handling everything else. I was handling the entire line. So Spider-Man was given to Steve Ditko who did a wonderful job on it. Ditko developed Spider-Man. Ditko's style sold Spider-Man. Ditko's stories, which were wonderful, developed Spider-Man. Ditko did the Spider-Man that is popular with everybody today. It's Ditko's Spider-Man that does it."

Jack can even trace the history on his creation of Thor.

"I did a version of Thor for D.C. in the Fifties before I did him for Marvel. He had a red beard but he was a legendary figure, which I liked. I liked the figure of Thor at D.C. and I created Thor at Marvel because I was forever enamored of legends. I knew all about these legends which is why I knew about Balder, Heimdall and Odin. I tried to update Thor and put him in a superhero costume. He looked great in it and everybody loved him, but he was still Thor."

Jack Kirby has a creative philosophy which he has followed ever since his split with Joe Simon, and largely before as well. It's a philosophy that involves more than a usual amount of creative control in a business which often has operated like an assembly line.

"I was a penciller and a storyteller, and I insisted on doing my own writing. I always wrote my own story no matter what it was. Nobody ever wrote a story for me. I created my own characters. I always did that. That was the whole point of comics for me. I created my own concepts and I enjoyed doing that. That's how I created the Silver Surfer.

"I'd been using gangsters and it wasn't fair for superheroes to fight gangsters. My basic philosophy, if you want to call it that, is fairness. I believe in fairness. Gangsters wouldn't stand a chance against superheroes so I had to find people as good as superheroes who could compete on their own level and that gave rise to the supervillain. I found myself coming out with the most powerful villain, and the most controversial (which is great for sales), and that's Galactus. I felt that somewhere around the cosmos are powerful things that we know nothing about and from that came Galactus. He was almost like a god and that's where I came up with the god concepts. There might be things out there that are ultimates compared to us. When I came up with Galactus I didn't know what to do with him. I couldn't kill Galactus, he was my god. What do you do with God when you have him on your hands? So I backed away from him, which is what the characters in the book did. It cost the Silver Surfer his power and position and he became a fallen angel. Galactus zapped him and made him stay on Earth forever. That concept is so powerful that it moves me and it sold a lot of comics. People found that same element in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. When that feeling comes in it's a powerful feeling. It's powerful because it's a mystery. It's somewhere that there's a gap that you know nothing about in which things happen that we know nothing about and of course we interpret them in our own way. But they have such power that they move us.

"Somewhere out in the cosmos I believe there are things like that. I don't

know what they are. I don't know what they look like so I have to represent them in my own fashion. No matter how you represent them, they're so powerful that they'll attract the reader and that's my job."

AT DC:

FROM THE OLD GODS TO THE NEW GODS

I wondered whether, since Kirby wanted to experiment and try an entirely new pantheon of his own characters, he couldn't have just done The New Gods cycle at Marvel instead of D.C.?

"There's a whole other story that I'm not telling you. All I'm telling you is just what I do, editorially. That other story is a different kind of story." That story involves other hands taking creative credit for work Jack did himself. "It's part of that," he agreed. "When other people interfere with your work, you apply at another company. So I got involved in other things, such as The New Gods. I wanted to do something different. I'm basically an experimenter. I wanted to do the first novel in comics, and I did it—*The New Gods*. In four books I did The New Gods, *The Forever People*, *Jimmy Olsen*, *Mr. Miracle* and their own book."

Here it pays one to note that this took place before the creation of the Marvel Graphic Novels series, before graphic novels from any other publisher, before the beginning of the recent phenomenon of creator-owned comics and even largely before the existence of a specialty market for comic books.

"The D.C. people came to me out here in California. I was still with Marvel and they said, 'Well, Superman is dying. *Time* magazine says Superman can't carry the line. Would you like to do Superman?' I said no, I didn't want to do Superman. The guy said that I'd do a good job. I replied that I like to do my own books. I like to do my own writing. I'd like to do something new. I asked him, 'What's your worst selling book?' It was *Jimmy Olsen*. I said, 'Give me *Jimmy Olsen*' and I took *Jimmy Olsen* and incorporated it in with the god books, and of course it sold very well. All of the books connected with the New Gods sold well. And from those books I created an army of characters who are still popular today."

And yet Kirby didn't do the New Gods because he was attempting to achieve a special creative goal.

"No, my goals had been achieved. I'm not out to achieve goals. I'm a guy with a job. Doing my own books wasn't a goal—I just wanted to do something different. I knew that if I did the same old thing that it wouldn't help D.C. My job was to help D.C. That's what I was there for. Since they came all the way out to California to see me, it would certainly have been stupid of me to disappoint them. I didn't want to disappoint them. I wanted to give them something beyond the stuff they had. The stuff they had wasn't making it. I had to give them something different in order to make it. That's a tough thing to do and so I did it."

Although he also created the incredibly popular *Kamandi*, a book which sold based upon the momentum he built for it even after he was no longer on it, and several other characters still populating the D.C. universe even now, his stay at D.C. was considerably shorter than his long creative tenure at Marvel had been. In fact he left D.C. with the New Gods saga uncompleted.

Briefly touching on the reasons for his departure, Kirby says, "There's a dark side to comics. It involves personalities, differences, a lot of things. It has nothing to do with creating characters and stories. Those things can develop and so you've got to meet those things head on and I did. I made decisions about those things about as easily as I made decisions about a story."

When Kirby returned to Marvel, fans

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43

MY PAL SUPERMAN introduces me to all my favorite heroes, the JLA

BY JACOBS AND JONES

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My shift at the bookstore was almost over when Superman dropped in to browse. I was shelving fiction. Every once in a while he would help me out by shelving a few books at super-speed.

"If you see anything you think I should read, let me know, Will," he said.

"Sure," I said. "But this book store, like all others in San Francisco, has a very poor fiction selection."

"It's surprising that a city with the cultural standards of San Francisco should lack a really good bookstore, isn't it, Will?"

"Yes, it is surprising, Kal," I said "Could you help me here, pal? I'd like to get this whole box upon the shelves by six, so that I can leave on time."

"Of course, pal. Why Will! These books don't seem to be in very good order."

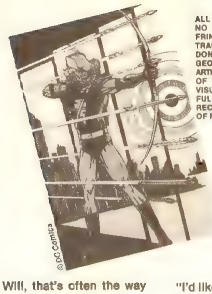
"We don't alphabetize the paperbacks here. We try to keep books whose authors' names begin with the same letter more or less together, but we don't have time to be thorough."

Suddenly Superman sped into action, whizzing past me, behind me and all around me, many times a second. The whole paperback fiction section became a red and blue blur. Before my eyes, the shelves of books assumed a thorough alphabetical order.

"There," said Superman beaming, separating one last Frank Yerby novel from the Emile Zolas.

"Thank you, Kal," I said. "But I'm afraid your super-efforts have been in vain. By tomorrow afternoon, the customers will have reduced this whole section back to its accustomed chaos."

He frowned thoughtfully at that.



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"You know, Will, that's often the way life is. No matter how much good you may achieve, time will undo you. I shudder to think how many times I've put my arch-enemy Lex Luthor behind bars, only to see him escape again. Maybe I should fly over this bookstore periodically and check the shelves with my combined x-ray and telescopic vision to see if anything needs reorganizing."

"Don't worry about it," I said, patting his arm. "You have enough to do as it is without watching over bookstores. Come on. Let's go out for a drink."

At the counter, as I filled out my time card, I pointed out a rare copy of Philip Wylie's *Gladiator*, priced at $40.00.

"This is a book you might find interesting," I said, "if you ever have a little extra money to throw around."

He scrutinized the cover. "You know, I've never cared for science fiction. It's a little too fantastic for my taste."

Just then, his chest emblem emitted a high-pitched whistle. Customers looked around to see where it was coming from. Kal signalled me and we stepped outside. As usual, people pointed and gawked and said, "Superman! Superman!"

WILL GOES TO THE JLA

"That was my emergency signal from the Justice League of America," he said.

"I guess that means tonight's off," I said glumly.

"I hate to do that to you, pal. Maybe it'll be a short case and we can still get together for a little coffee and dessert in the evening. Of course, if it's a long case... I'll tell you what, Will. How would you like to come to a JLA meeting?"

"I'd like that fine," I said.

"I'm sure the other fellows and gals would be happy to meet you," he said. "After all, you introduced me to your co-workers here at the bookstore and I should do the same. Let me wrap you in my cape, to protect you from the winds during our super-speed flight, and I'll fly you to the Justice League's secret sanctuary. Of course you realize, without clearing it with the other supermembers, I can't allow you to see the actual location...".

"Of course," I said. "Just as you aren't at liberty to reveal their secret identities to me."

Without further ado, Superman bundled me in his cape and we flashed across the country. As we came upon the great headquarters building in the desert, Superman drew the cape from my eyes and I saw other heroes speeding to answer the emergency signal: Green Lantern, flying by the verdant might of his mystic power ring; Wonder Woman, piloting her invisible robot plane, devised by the super-scientific amazons of Paradise Island; and Flash, a mere scarlet streak of super-speed across the earth. I imagined others would be arriving shortly. Green Arrow in his Arrow-Plane, Aquaman with the aid of some strange water-beast, Hawkman and Hawkgirl by the power of the Anti-Grav belts from their native Thanagar, a planet orbiting Polaris. My spirit soared at the thought of all my favorite heroes in one sanctuary.

Green Lantern, Flash and Wonder Woman were already at the long JLA meeting table when we entered. As Superman prepared to introduce me, green-skinned J'onn J'onzz, Manhunter from Mars, flew through the door. Then the phone rang and Wonder Woman answered it. From the receiver popped a red and blue dot, rapidly growing into a little man. It was the Atom, that mighty mite, arriving by his favorite means of transportation, the electronic impulses of a telephone line.

"Well, Superman, who's your friend?" he asked, when he had enlarged to his full six-inch size.

"Everybody, this is my friend Will Jones," said Superman. All their faces lit up in recognition of the name. Superman introduced me to each of the heroes in turn. Hawkman, Hawkgirl, Aquaman and the Elongated Man arrived shortly. Superman introduced us and we exchanged nods, but the tense mood was not conducive to conversation.

Hawkman said, "Who called this emergency meeting?"

"I did," said the Batman, appearing suddenly from one of the vast monitor rooms. "Our old nemesis, T.O. Morrow, the twisted scientific genius whose name has always filled him with a fascination for the future, has launched another attack on the Earth with his futuristic weapons."

"He's reckoned without the Justice League of America," said Superman. "We've stopped him before and we'll stop him again."

"Aquaman and the Martian Manhunter will speed to Tonga Tipou in the South Pacific, where a giant robot is wreaking havoc on the peaceful populace," said Batman firmly. "Wonder Woman and the Elongated Man, you will fly to Guadalajara, Mexico where a giant ray-blaster is threatening to set off dangerous earthquake faults Green Arrow and... where is Green Arrow?"

"He didn't show up," said Flash.

"That son of a bitch," said Green Lantern.

"We'll have time for personal differences later," said Batman. "We'll simply have to do without the Emerald Archer."

"We should be getting good at that by now," grumbled Green Lantern.

Batman continued, "Hawkman and Hawkgirl, fly to your orbiting Thanagarian scientific station and see what your absorbascon can tell us about T.O. Morrow."

"The Absorbascon is a remarkable device capable of imparting all earthly knowledge to its users," noted Superman, leaning toward me.

"I see," I said.

"Superman and I will attack T.O. Morrow himself in his hideout high in the Rockies of Wyoming," said Batman. "The Atom, Green Lantern and Flash, you will guard our secret sanctuary in case our villainous opponent launches an assault on our very sanctum sanctorum. And watch over our friend Will here."

"Oh, don't trouble about me," I said.

"Nonsense," said Flash. "It's no trouble at all."

The others were gone in an instant, all grinning and flexing their muscles. Flash, the fastest man alive, the Atom, that gossamer gumshoe, and the emerald gladiator, Green Lantern, were all left at the table with me.

EVERYBODY'S A WRITER

"So, Will," said the Flash. "Superman tells us you're a novelist."

"Well," I said modestly, "I do like to write."

"You know, I've never been much for novels," said Flash. "Maybe I should try a few. I mostly read non-fiction. Scientific reports and so on. You see, in my secret identity, I'm a police scientist."

"I've always enjoyed collecting odd facts," said that six-inch savage, the Atom. "I find they help me on my adventures. Did ou know that the stone opal is primarily composed of water?"

"No, I had no idea," I said.

"You'd be amazed how useful such information can be when battling super-villains," said the tiny titan. "I like novels that inform me. Have you ever read Michener?"

"He's very interesting," I said.

"I've always thought I might want to write a novel someday," said Flash, leaning back thoughtfully. I was struck by his slow speech and gestures, like an old farmer. "I guess I just wouldn't know how. They say everybody has one novel in him, though. Don't they? The story of their own life, I mean."

"You see, I'm a research scientist in my secret identity," said the Illiputian lawman in his tiny voice. "I like historical novels, if they're well research ed."

"Research is very important," I agreed.

"Damn that Green Arrow," said Green Lantern suddenly, brushing his hair back from his handsome face. "How many meetings has he missed? Ever since he got goddamned socially conscious and decided goddamned super-heroes ought to be fighting goddamned slum-lords, it's been hello to the goddamned super-villains!"

Flash chuckled and patted Green Lantern's knee condescendingly. "Don't let him get under your skin, GL. I think you two just spent too much time together. Why don't you join the conversation?"

"I'm sorry, Will," said Green Lantern, reaching across the table to shake my hand. "I'm afraid I'm rather hard on my compatriots."

"No harder than he is on himself," said Flash with a wink. "GL's the perfectionist of our little super-heroes' union. Still, he's been known to bend an elbow now and then in his private life."

"As a test pilot in my secret identity, and the boyfriend of the daughter of the boss of a major aircraft corporation on Coast City, I often find myself in a rather fast crowd," said the verdant avenger.

"You know, I've never gone much for the sports cars and debutants and champagne life," said the sultan of

speed. "I have my wife, and my house in the Midwest, and we have a sedan and some nice furniture..."

That ferocious flea, the Atom, laughed. "I'm afraid a research scientist's salary never really gives me much choice!"

Then Hawkman and Hawkgirl returned from their space station. Their bizarre headgear made me a little uneasy at first, but they were charming in the manner of so many cultured foreign immigrants.

"T.O. Morrow's very weakness is his dependency on weapons of the future, when super-heroes do not exist," announced Hawkman.

"Haven't you fellows offered Will anything to eat or drink while he's waiting?" asked Hawkgirl.

"Well, I'm sorry about that," said Flash. "We got to talking about books. I was telling him I might want to write a novel myself someday. What do you think, Will? I'll tell you the story and you write it. We'll split the proceeds fifty-fifty. We'll be best-sellers."

"What sort of novels do you write, Will?" asked Hawkman, settling his great winged form into a chair.

I shrugged. "Just contemporary, realistic stories."

"I always enjoy police procedural

novels," said Hawkman. "Do you know Ed McBain?"

"We original came from Thanagar to Earth to study Earthly detection procedures," explained Hawkgirl.

"Fascinating," I said.

"I'll bet we could get a novel out of all the times I've battled Captain Cold," said Flash. "Now there's a character! The first time we met, he used his freeze-gun to..."

"Come on, Flash. Will doesn't want to hear your damned stories," said Green Lantern good-naturedly.

"How do you know he doesn't?" asked Flash. "Will, did you know that just as intense heat creates mirages, so does intense cold create them too?"

"I had no idea," I said.

"Well, Captain Cold had the idea," said Flash, tapping his skull to emphasize Captain Cold's cleverness.

"Say Will," said Green Lantern, changing the subject. "How are the woman-troubles?"

JLA ADVICE TO THE LOVELORN

I was taken aback. "Well, I... er... I've got nothing to complain about at the moment..."

"Don't embarass him now!" snapped Hawkgirl.

"I'm not embarrassing him," said Green Lantern. "I'm just confronting the facts fearlessly. Superman's talked more about Will's girl problems than he has about his writing, and that's the truth."

"Kal's been helping me out," I said.

"Ruining your life, you mean," grinned Green Lantern, and the others laughed. "Listen, I don't mean to say anything against Kal. As the self-appointed protector of mankind, he's without peer. He's the best at what he does. But with the ladies—nothing. He's stiff, he's condescending, he's too upright. He's been content for years with that fool Lois Lang, whose only goal in life is to uncover his secret identity..."

"Now, Green Lantern!" said Hawkgirl.

"My point is just that if you want help with the fair sex, you should talk to a super-hero with a little more experience."

"Who might you be thinking of?" chuckled that savage shrimp, the Atom.

"Let's get a woman's opinion," said Flash. "Hawkgirl, how do you think Will could make himself more attractive to the girls?"

"Well, I think he's quite charming as he is, for an Earthling," said Hawkgirl. "I've always liked quiet, cultured men."

I realized again how much I hated being seen as a quiet, cultured man, but I knew she meant well, and so I kept quiet. Suddenly there was a heavy footfall. Wonder Woman and the Elongated Man had returned.

ANOTHER HERO HEARD FROM

"Just as a pistol can be made to misfire by the introduction of a foreign body, so the Elongated Man was easily able to jam the ray-blaster with his incredibly pliable body while I used my Amazon strength to hold the fault together," said Wonder Woman.

"We're having an argument here," said Flash. "Wonder Woman, how do you think Will here could improve his chances with the ladies?"

"Physical development," said the amazing Amazon. "There is no substitute for a well-toned muculature and a strong constitution."

The Elongated Man laughed. "Except maybe a prehinsile proboscis!" The stretchable sleuth extended his nose ten feet in front of him, wrapped it around a coffee cup and drew it back to his mouth. Wonder Woman looked slightly disdainful, but I found him immediately likable.

"So, you must be the author!" he said brightly.

"Well..." I began, but he chattered on.

"I love mysteries. Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins. An occasional Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers."

"Hammett? Chandler?" I asked.

He wrapped one attenuated limb around me. "Now you're talking literature!" he said. "To quote Ross MacDonald, 'Chandler wrote like a slumming angel. He invested the sun-blinded streets of L.A. with a romantic presence.'"

"Very good!" I said.

"You're my kind of writer, I have a feeling," he said. "Have you ever tried talking to Batman about literature?"

"We chatted a while," I said.

The Elongated Man made a contorted face, but Flash said, "Don't start in on Batman's taste, now. Say, Will, I've been giving the matter a little thought. Do you know any good how-to-write books?"

"*Elements of Style* by Strunk and White is rather basic," I said. "And *Structuring Your Novel* by Meredith and Fitzgerald."

With a flash of red, he was gone through the wall.

"Just as a straw blown by a hurricane can penetrate an oak tree, so can Flash, travelling at super-speed, pass through solid walls," noted Green Lantern.

"I see," I said.

An instant later, Flash was back. "Sorry I took so long," he said. "There was a line. Are these the books?"

He had bought the books I recommended. "Yes," I said.

"You aren't still thinking about writing that novel of yours, are you?"

asked the Elongated Man.

"Maybe you'd like to help," said Flash. "Remember our second adventure together, when you went searching the jungles of the Yucatan for gingold, the fruit whose essence gives you your amazing stretching powers?"

"And I blundered onto an alien invasion?"

"And I came to help you and we were both shrunken by the alien reducing ray?"

"And you destroyed the alien ray-gun by running back and forth on it at super-speed until your feet wore right through it?"

THE PLAYBOY OF THE SUPER-HERO WORLD!

While the others chatted animatedly, Green Lantern drew me to him discreetly with his power beam.

"Listen, Will," he said. "You and I ought to consider a double date sometime. With my looks and courage and daring lifestyle and your knowledge of literature and art and fashion and things, we'd be a deadly combination."

"I'd like that," I said.

"You see, it's a problem with us super-heroes," he said earnestly. "We're all action-oriented. We like to talk about our adventures and our arch-villains. Sometimes we kick back and talk about sports or what parts of the cosmos we like to visit. But we never really learn about the finer things in life. Ever since Superman met you, he's been telling us things that are just over our heads. You know, I tried to read *Ulysses* and I couldn't get a damned thing out of it."

"It's a difficult book," I said.

But women like that kind of thing," said the emerald gladiator. "Carol—that's my girl—always wants to talk

about 'Gorp' or 'Timeless Love' or 'Music for Lizards' or some other damned thing she's reading, and what do I know about it? I've been off in the negative universe of Qward battling the renegade Green Lantern Sinestro or some goddamned thing while these books are coming out. If you could..."

He didn't finish his sentence, because Aquaman and the Martian Manhunter returned from their mission grinning broadly.

VICTORY CELEBRATION JLA STYLE

"My loyal sea-creatures toppled the giant robot into the ocean," beamed Aquaman.

"It breathed fire, my one weakness, at me," said the Martian Manhunter, "but I was able to blow it away with my Martian super-breath."

"Hey, Aquaman, could you get me a beer?" called Green Lantern.

"Make it two," said Flash. "How about you, Will? Make it three, buddy!"

Aquaman stood under the special shower devised to give him his hourly dose of water, without which he would die, and then opened the refrigerator and pulled out three Miller Lites. Just then, with a flash of blue and red, Superman returned, bearing Batman in his arms. By the grins on their faces, we could all tell that they had succeeded in their mission. Everyone applauded.

"T.O. Morrow is back in jail where he belongs," said Batman. "Someday criminals will learn that evil can never triumph over good."

"Hear hear!" piped that spunky speck, the Atom.

"Drinks all around!" said the Elongated Man.

"Hey, it's Miller Time!" said Flash.

"Honestly, how can you drink that swill?" asked Hawkgirl.

Green Lantern popped the top of his can and raised his beer in a toast.

"Here's to all the bastards who give us the chance to be heroes."

"You all seem very cheerful," said Superman. "Are you enjoying Will's company?"

"Hello, I'm having a great time!" said Green Lantern. "Will's a great listener!"

He and I clinked beer cans in a salute.

"Since we were all so successful," said Flash, "does anyone feel like a ball game? There must be a good one somewhere in this country tonight."

"There's a Giant-Dodger game in Los Angeles," I said.

"I would like to see this young Valenzuela in action," said Superman. "I always appreciate excellence in our young folks."

"How tedious," said Hawkgirl.

"Some aspects of Earth culture still baffle us," said Hawkman.

"Before we run off to the game," said Green Lantern, "I'd like to suggest something. You know, we used to have a teen mascot named Snapper Carr. We made him an honorary member in recognition of the assistance he gave us on our early mission against Starro, the interplanetary hypnotic starfish."

"Good old Snapper," said Flash wistfully. "I still remember how he'd snap his fingers and say something in that preposterous hep-cat slang of his: 'Beam me in, Daddy-O, 'cause this cat's ears are itchin' to blow.' Or something like that."

"But now the changing times have turned Snapper against us and filled him with bitterness for his old pals," said Wonder Woman. "He's even taken to speaking in proper English."

"Personally, I think it's high time we had another mascot," said Green Lantern.

"Well, what a nice idea," said Superman. "I move that Will Jones be elected an honorary member of the Justice League of America."

The huge green Martian, J'onn J'onzz punched me in the arm and said, "Why sure, I'll second that! Who knows? He and I might be related!"

Everyone laughed. And then, when the vote was taken, I was unanimously elected into that noblest and most powerful of clubs on Earth, the Justice League of America.

I'm not ashamed to say that there were tears in my eyes.

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 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

SPIDER-MAN
SCRIPT: STAN LEE • ART: STEVE DITKO • LETTERING: JOHNNY DEE
NOTE! SPIDER-MAN FIRST APPEARED AS A FEATURE IN AMAZING FANTASY #15 AUG. SO GREAT WAS YOUR RESPONSE VIA LETTERS AND POSTCARDS, THAT IT WAS DECIDED TO GIVE HIM HIS OWN MAGAZINE! A BRIEF SUMMARY FOLLOWS...
FREAK!
PUBLIC MENACE!
SURE, YOU'VE READ MANY STORIES ABOUT MANY DIFFERENT MAGAZINE HEROES! BUT THAT'S NEVER BEEN A STORY LIKE THIS ONE--BECAUSE THERE'S NEVER BEEN A HERO LIKE---
SPIDER-MAN!

characters weren't all handsome and the locales weren't all sleek like a Carmine Infantino city. It looked like the places we lived and the people we knew. The comic was definitely like nothing we'd ever seen before.

With the second issue the continuing adventures started being brought more into focus. Despite the booding, threatening ending of the first issue, here he came up with his job idea–selling photos to Jameson. He sold enough photos of the Vulture to pay his aunt's rent for a year with money left over.

As with the first issue, this one featured two stories. The first introduced the Vulture in a clever and interesting story. The only drawback is that, like Mr. Fantastic, Peter Parker cobbled together an electronic doohickey to defeat the garishly garbed felon while knowing nothing about how the Vulture flew. I guess with some people a deduction can go a long way.

The second story in the issue was a cross between a super-hero story and something you'd expect to find in the old *Tales to Astonish*. Spidey stumbles on to a nest of aliens (and I don't mean the Latino variety) and foils their invasion plans. Even the conclusion is in keeping with the old bizarre twist at the end bit. And drawn by Ditko it was even more effective.

Issue three introduced probably the most popular Marvel villain next to Dr. Doom--Doctor Octopus! This first booklength story of Spidey has some of the most dynamic graphics Ditko has ever done. Much is done with contrasting lights and shadows whenever Dr. Octopus is seen. Even in black and white this story is extremely effective and is one of those books which demonstrates the power of comic book storytelling when handled by a master. Another strength of this and other early issues is the use of captions only when necessary. Instead of cluttering up a page with overly wordy captions such as most comics do today, this issue shows the strength of using only the amount of words necessary. This lack of captions is all important to the strength and pacing of this story.

These early issues showed Marvel Comics at the height of its creative form. In issue #4 he met the Sandman, an oddball villain if there ever was one and, like the Hulk, the product of a man getting caught by an atomic blast.

In #5 he faced Dr. Doom, in a story which was a sequel to *Fantastic Four* #17. The F.F. even make an appearance at the end. *Spider-Man* went monthly with #4 and for a few issues, as though Ditko's art wasn't as slick as it was on the first three issues, as though he couldn't spend as much time inking it. But it was still fine work.

One reason the newer, younger fans of Spider-Man can't warm up to these classic issues is that, other than Aunt May and Jameson, the supporting cast is almost entirely different. Peter is in High School and Flash Thompson, the ultimate jock, is the bane of his existence. Plus Peter is always having misunderstandings with Liz a girl he likes, as well as pining away for Betty Brant, an "older Woman" and Jameson's secretary. All of these characters and relationships were resolved over 15 years ago in the comic book, before most of the current readers were even born. So while some new fans can't warm up to Steve Ditko's art, the stories are probably just as much the reason that *Marvel Tales* actually sold better when it was reprinting more recent issues of *Spider-Man*.

While most of Spidey's adventures take place in New York (which must have been declared a disaster area years ago because of all the super-villains who lay waste to sections of it periodically), issue #6 sent Peter Parker on assignment to Florida where he could investigate the mysterious being called The Lizard. This is the type of story Marvel did quite well back then, wherein the villain is not responsible for his actions. Curt Connors, in trying to grow a new arm, instead becomes a human lizard when his formula derived from reptile enzymes backfires on him. This time instead of a gizmo, Spidey whips up a concoction which returns Connors to normal. The Lizard has returned over the years but never as poignantly portrayed as he was in the original appearance when we saw him slowly losing his humanity and reacting to his family. The story is somewhat reminescent of the old film *The Alligator People*.

Number seven featured the return of the Vulture but it was issue eight where obvious changes began. Peter Parker had gradually started looking less geeky and more handsome over the months, but on page two of the story when his glasses are broken, he's clearly not the same ugly guy we saw in the origin story. I guess getting bitten

A STORY HAS TO START SOMEWHERE SO LET'S BEGIN WITH A LONELY WAREHOUSE, IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, WHERE WE FIND A ROBBERY TAKING PLACE.
WOLD IT, YOU GUYS! I THINK I HEARD SOMETHIN'!
RELAX, CHARLIE! IT WAS PROBABLY JUST A MOUSE!
BUDDENLY, THE MOST AWESOME IMAGE IN CRIME-FIGHTING APPEARS ON THE WALL DIRECTLY ABOVE THE STARTLED THIEVES...
MOUSE? YOU'VE NEVER SEEN A MOUSE LIKE THIS BEFORE!
LOOK!! IT--IT'S--
DON'T BE SHY, FELLA! YOU CAN SAY MY NAME! IT'S SPIDER-MAN!
GET 'IM! THERE ARE THREE OF US! ME CAN'T TAKE US ALL!
UGH!
BROTHER, YOU'RE LIVING IN A FOOL'S PARADISE!
OOF!
OW!
MINUTES LATER...
SOME BIG CRIMINAL MASTER-MIND YOU ARE!
AW, SHADDUP! WHOEVER EXPECTED SPIDER-MAN TO BUTT IN!
LOOK, JOE! SPIDER-MAN'S BEEN HERE! AND HOW!
AND, NOT FAR AWAY...
IT'S ALMOST TOO EASY! I'VE RUN OUT OF ENEMIES WHO CAN GIVE ME ANY REAL OPPOSITION! I'M TOO POWERFUL FOR ANY FOE! I ALMOST WISH FOR AN OPPONENT WHO'D GIVE ME A RUN FOR MY MONEY!
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by radioactive spiders clears up vision problems as well as your complexion.

The second story in #6 (the last time they'd do this during the Ditko years), showed us what Spider-Man might have looked like had Kirby been the book's artist. It's just a plotless little exercise in which Spidey meets the F. F. again. Although inked by Ditko, Spidey's eyepieces on the mask are very small, and while the art is very good, Spider-Man just doesn't move with the same grace that Ditko infused him with. Also, Kirby's people tend to all look very similar (and very handsome) whereas Ditko can really draw some unusual and very dissimilar looking characters when he puts his mind to it. And he really put his mind to it in his Spider-Man days. You couldn't

HE MIGHT BE IN TROUBLE! SOMEWHERE! HE MIGHT NEED ME! IF ONLY I KNEW!
I'M GOING OUT FOR A MOMENT, MAY. BUT I'LL BE RIGHT BACK. WEAR YOU JUST MAY RIGHT THERE DEAR AND TRY NOT TO WORRY!
OH, PETER...
PETER...
SHE'S JEAN NEWCOMB! SHE NEEDS A SECRETARY! SHE'S A FRIEND OF MR. MICHAEL!
MEANWHILE AT A RAILROAD STATION IN THE MIDWEST, [illegible] WHO HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE LIFE OF PETER PARKER PAUSES BETWEEN TRAINS...
I MUST RETURN TO NEW YORK. I REALIZE NOW THAT A U. S. CAN NEVER RUN FROM A CRISIS!
NO MATTER HOW BRIEF OUR ANY BE!
THIS IS ART [illegible] AT STATION WE'LL BE IN CHICAGO, HOWEVER NO WAY NOTHING HAS BEEN HEARD OF SPIDER-MAN THESE PAST FEW DAYS...
SPIDER-MAN [illegible] THE MASKED AVENGER [illegible] PETER ADMITS [illegible] IN WHO IS [illegible] HAVE
HE RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYTHING BAD HAPPENS? DANGER? UNCERTAINTY? AND FEAR!
MAGAZINE HEADLINES
I RETURN TO THE NEW BUGLE, WILL HE GIVE ME MY OLD JOB BACK?
IF HE DOES, WHAT IF HE LIKE SEEING PETER PARKER AND HEAD LEERS AGAIN!
AND WHAT WILL THEY SAY WHEN THEY SEE THAT WILL THERE STILL BE A PLACE IN THESE... YES FOR BETTY BRANT?
[illegible] AND STRANGELY UNABLE TO ERASE THE HAUNTING IMAGE OF A [illegible] HOW OVERSHADOW [illegible] AS HE SLEEPS...
[illegible] AND SEEMS TO BOND...
WHY... WHY DOES THE VISION OF SPIDER-MAN KEEP REAPPEARING IN MY BRAIN...?

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mistake one person for another in Ditko's Spider-Man.

One oddity about these early issues is that the color of Spider-Man's costume kept changing. One issue it would be blue and red and the next it would be purple and red. I always found the purple, and a deep purple it was, a more interesting combination with the red, webbed portion.

The Ditko years introduced characters and stories which would shape the future of the title. Issue fourteen introduced The Green Goblin without giving us an origin or a secret identity. This did not come for a long time. There wasn't even a good suspect. Issues 17-19 were the first time, and the most effective, that Peter Parker quit being Spider-Man. What made this work so well is that the uncredited writing by Ditko captured a much truer sense of despair and alienation than Lee did by himself. The turbulant feelings expressed by the characters seemed much truer to life than the same things attempted by Lee alone beginning in *Spider-Man* #39.

By *Spider-Man* #20, Ditko's art had tightened up and smoothed out again so that the inking looked much more slick than it had back around #7. This is the issue which introduced The Scorpion, who made an interesting reappearance in *Spider-Man Annual* #18. The Scorpion marked the first, but not the last, time that Jameson paid to have something created to defeat Spider-Man. But in doing so he created an even worse menace. In 25 he paid to have a robot programmed to chase and capture Spider-Man, and it worked. Issue #28, which featured one of the most effective covers in the series, introduced the Molten Man and featured Peter Parker's High School graduation. Real changes took place in the series after this, including the fading away of personalities who had been major supporting characters up to this time, such as Liz Bowling and Flash Thompson. High School was over and as is the case with such things, people tend to go their separate ways.

In issues 31-33 we saw what is probably the best continued story the series has presented. While Aunt May getting sick was already becoming a recurring motif by this time, it was handled with a lot of skill in this story, especially when Spider-Man had to take on Dr. Octopus and his gang to get the serum which would save her. These three issues contain the quintessential elements which made Spider-Man and Marvel what it was in the Sixties. (Read them over in their original or reprint form and let us know if you think that Marvel is publishing Spider-Man stories of this calibre today.)

The first two Spider-Man annuals (in 1964 & 1965), featured stories which really pulled out all stops. In the first annual Spider-Man took on virtually all of his major foes up to that time in a

real feast of Ditko excellence. It also introduced the bizarre subplot of Aunt May liking Dr. Octopus and thinking him a wonderful gentleman. The second annual guest-starred Ditko's other masterfully handled character, Dr. Strange. For sheer excellence these annuals would not even be approached for many years.

The last Ditko *Spider-Man* was #38 and the last couple issues he did were fairly average fare, as though 'Steve was just marking time.

In 39 the Green Goblin returned, captured Spider-Man and unmasked him in a story so good we were not supposed to notice that Ditko was gone. Instead it only made us wonder how special it would have looked had Ditko drawn it instead of John Romita. Romita did a credible job on Spider-Man for a few issues but then it started looking rushed and not as carefully thought out. Plus the stories lacked the depth they had had under Ditko, which was the real revelation of how much Steve had contributed to the series.

It seems that nearly everyone has drawn Spider-Man over the years since Ditko left. One of the best jobs has been done by Gil Kane who brings a special atmosphere with him to the books he draws.

Marvel has always tried to celebrate special issues with special stories. In #50, Spider-Man quit and hung up his costume again. But for #100 they came up with the especially silly notion of having him grow four extra arms. This only lasted about three issues. At the time I hadn't seen the issue and when someone told me about it I thought they were joking. Unfortunately they were serious, but I didn't believe them until I saw the comic itself. Boy, it was a comic all right.

Spider-Man, of course, has become a virtual industry unto himself what with *Marvel Tales, Web of Spider-Man* and *Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man* appearing every month. He's to Marvel what Superman is to D.C. He's everywhere and the over-exposure, while bringing more opportunities for

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good writers and artists to do him, has seldom delivered.

There have been some recent annuals which have been pretty good, though. Annual #13 featured Dr. Octopus and was written by Marv Wolfman and drawn by John Byrne and Terry Austin. Annuals 14 & 15 were both by Frank Miller. While Byrne drew Spider-Man his own way (which was fine), Miller brought a touch of Ditko to his layouts and designs. Annual #14 even guest-starred Dr. Strange. Annual #18 went even further in capturing the Ditko flair, even to often using the nine panels to a page approach which many of Ditko's *Spider-Man's* employed. The art is a cross between Ditko stylized touches and the modern slick look of most comics.

'nostalgia has been a popular springboard for Spider-Man stories. In *What If?* #46 ("What If Spider-Man's Uncle Ben Had Lived?"), the art drips with atmosphere and Ditko *homage*. It captures the feel of the Sixties Spider-Man quite well for that. It's written by Peter Gillis and drawn by Ron Frenz and Sam DeLaRosa. Another one, much shorter but just as good from every angle, appeared in *Spider-Man* #248, "The Kid Who Collects Spider-Man!" Drawn by Ron Frenz & Terry Austin, and written by Roger Stern, it's a touching and blatantly manipulative story...and yet after you've finished it you wish that it had really happened, and was longer.

Frank Miller did his usual fine job on Spider-Man once again in *Marvel Team-Up* #100, which also featured the Fantastic Four. The story by Chris Claremont & Frank Miller is unusually good and the art is wonderful, especially the splash page which instantly hurls us older fans back 20 years because it looks like pure Ditko. No one has left his mark on this title the way that Steve Ditko did.

The biggest news in Spider-Man recently, of course was his new all black costume which premiered in #252, although the origin of it wasn't seen for over 6 months until *Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars* #8. The odd thing is that by that time the costume had already been retired in the comic, although there are hints that it isn't gone forever.

Spider-Man is so ubiquitous that it's sometimes difficult to decide what to make of him. For instance, the Spider-Man newspaper strip has been running successfully for several years now, but the stories seem set in a completly different universe from the comic. When the Kingpin's wife was crippled in the strip and the Kingpin blamed himself, this aspect never appeared anywhere in Marvel comics. In fact a totally different use of the Kingpin's (perfectly healthy) wife was made by Frank Miller in the Daredevil comic book. The two stories never matched up. Even the recent, however short-lived, use of the new costume was not reflected in the newspaper strip even though the "new look" Spider-Man was appearing all over the place in Marvel Comics. That in itself was a big clue that Marvel had no intention of retaining the all black costume.

And of course there was even a Spider-Man live-action TV show a few years back as well as two different cartoon shows. He gets around. But it seems that for all the different versions of him that there are, there are fans for each version, who prefer that one over the others. And yet the best stories seem to happen when the current creative talent, who in most cases were little kids 20 years ago, reach back to the formative period of the comic when raw talent and fresh ideas were emerging out of each and every issue. That's when the stories catch fire and Spider-Man lives up to his legend. Would that it were so all the time.

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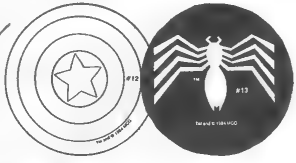

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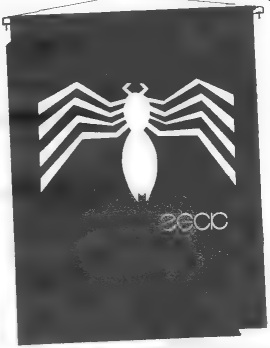

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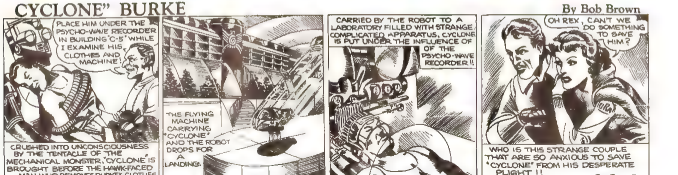
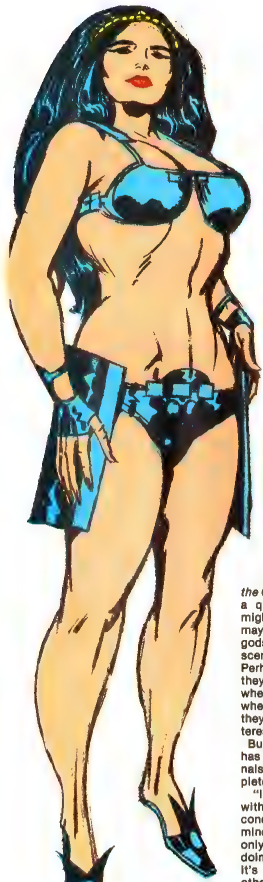

CYCLONE" BURKE
By Bob Brown
PLACE HIM UNDER THE PSYCHO-WAVE RECORDER IN BUILDING "C-5" WHILE I EXAMINE HIS CLOTHES AND MACHINE
CRUSHED INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS BY THE "MIRACLE OF THE MECHANICAL MONSTER," CYCLONE" IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE HAWK-FACED MAN WHO REMOVES BURKE'S CLOTHES.
"THE FLYING MACHINE CARRYING "CYCLONE" AND THE ROBOT DROPS FOR A LANDING.
CARRIED BY THE ROBOT TO A LABORATORY FILLED WITH STRANGE COMPLICATED APPARATUS, CYCLONE IS PUT UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE PSYCHO-WAVE RECORDER !!
OH REX, CAN'T WE DO SOMETHING TO SAVE HIM?
WHO IS THIS STRANGE COUPLE THAT ARE SO ANXIOUS TO SAVE "CYCLONE" FROM HIS DESPERATE PLIGHT !!

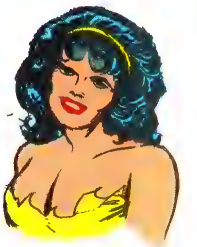
expected the return to the former heyday of the Fantastic Four, Thor and the others. But instead Kirby struck a deal not unlike the one he'd made at D.C. He'd work for Marvel, but only on his own titles. He created *The Eternals*, took over *The Black Panther* (causing Marvel to jettison a Don McGregor continuity in mid-stream, which was only picked up again after Jack again left Marvel), returned to *Captain America*, the character he had co-created so many years before, and began doing a regular comic spin-off from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. He did some covers on the titles he'd formerly brought to prominence, but just as Steve Ditko would do when he returned to Marvel, Jack did not just pick up where he had left off. In fact he did all but avoid the characters he'd created during the early days of Marvel Comics and turned into classics. Even when the Hulk appeared in an issue of *The Eternals*, it was a robot Hulk, thus keeping the series firmly outside of the Marvel continuity even though it was supposed to be a part of it.

As to why he used a robot Hulk instead of the actual character in that series, Jack explained, "It was a gimmick. It was a robot because I felt that it was a different way to use the Hulk. If I'd used the ordinary Hulk it would have been an entirely different type of approach and an entirely different type of story. I didn't want that. I wanted an approach where the Eternals were the main characters. Therefore if I'd used the Hulk as the Hulk himself then he would have been adding to the cast and I wanted a Hulk story in which the Eternals were the principal characters. A robot Hulk is just a robot Hulk. To be contended with, he is not part of the main cast."

And yet no matter how far-reaching events in *The Eternals* became, even to an invasion of New York, the only other Marvel character to become involved while Kirby handled the Eternals was Nick Fury, agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.

"The Eternals was a different type of story. Nick Fury had his own context. I never gave him a mystic touch—It was out-and-out spy stuff. *The Eternals* was the place where I started being mystic, dealing with what I sincerely think is moving in the root cores of all of us. It was a good little take-off on *Chariots of*





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the Gods, too. *Chariots of the Gods* left a question of mystery which I felt might be a possible scenario—that maybe gods did come down. What if gods did come down? That was my scenario about what might happen. Perhaps they never will. Perhaps they're still here, stored in a chamber where they have an atomic pattern and when the atomic pattern is reactivated they'll appear and life might get very interesting."

But Jack hasn't followed what Marvel has done with his concept of the Eternals after he left that saga uncompleted.

"I don't know what Marvel's doing with it. Somebody now has his own concept that's probably different from mine and it doesn't interest me. The only thing that interests me is what I'm doing. It's not a matter of being so-so, it's a matter of my interpreting the other guy. My main purpose in writing is not for me, it's for you. Whereas the other artist is maybe satisfying his own way of drawing, that's his own ambition. My ambition is to touch people and make them read my book."

When Kirby began the *2001* comic book, it featured the Star Child encountering a different character each issue and having some impact on their existence. But then that changed wehn he introduced Machine Man to the book.

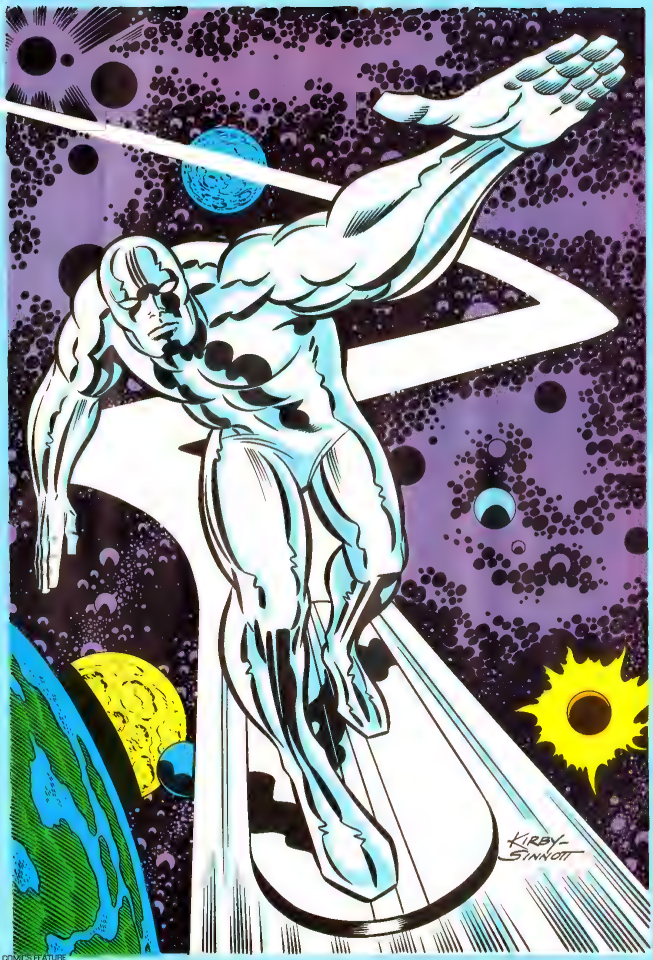
"I felt that the computer was more important to the strip than the Star Child. I feel that we're not Star Children. I think that we are headed toward the machine age in which machines will do all the things for us. We can't take the hazards that the machine would and that's why I feel that some day we'll have to create new computers—computers maybe that look like men. They'll do a lot for us. They'll do all the tough work. They might even be so sophisticated that they'll give us trouble. I think we're into other areas and the machine is all a part of that.

"They talk about us going into space—I don't believe it. I don't think that man would want to take that risk because of all the things that can go wrong. A man can't breathe in space. But for a machine? It doesn't matter. Spacewalking for us is dangerous, but a machine can do it like a snap. Have machines go out, like the HAL computer. That's why I felt that HAL was a lot more important than the man. HAL is not the next step in man, but it's going to be man's greatest tool, and man's greatest tool is going to be part of himself. That's why HAL is perfectly correct in killing these guys because he can do the job better. That's the way a machine would think. A machine is logical. The machine, of course, has no guilt, no remorse, and the machine has not the emotions we have or the background and therefore can think like a machine—strictly logical. He's not going to think like us at all. It was the machine's choice. HAL was sophisticated enough to do it."

THE FUTURE:

STILL CREATING NEW PROJECTS

When Jack left Marvel again, he did not return to D.C. as some expected. Rather he spent some time designing characters and concepts for Saturday Morning animated shows. Jack was in on the creation of Thundar as well as doing some storyboards for the second Fantastic Four cartoon show, the one without the Human Torch. Some of these drawings were appropriated and turned into a comic book story which ran in the back of a giant-sized Fantastic Four comic, billed as a comic book story by Jack Kirby much to his displeasure.



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He was lured back into comics by Pacific Comics where he created and drew *Captain Victory* and *Silver Star*. True to form Jack once again set a trend here, producing the first modern comic book to which the creator retained full ownership rights (the other early Pacific publication of which this was true was *Starslayer* by Mike Grell, now published by First Comics). But while there was much enthusiasm for these titles in foreign editions, sales in the U.S. slacked off quickly, and the books were finally suspended by mutual agreement. While the characters are wholly owned by Kirby, no other company has expressed interest in continuing them. Captain Victory in particular was criticized for being just another version of the New Gods cycle and the *Eternals*, covering old ground in an old way.

Most recently Jack has returned to D.C. where he's picked up the thread he left dangling when he dropped writing and drawing *The New Gods* several years ago, and in fact has completed the saga by adding one more new story to it. When the entire cycle was reprinted with the additional story in a deluxe format response was quite favorable. It seems that that comic buying public prefers it when Kirby sticks to the original if he is going to utilize the concept.

As to why Jack finally returned to D.C. he stated, "It was strictly a business offer. D.C. was fair. Like I say, I believe in fairness. D.C. was very fair with me. I think we work well together. They've got a good organization. Everything worked smoothly, we cooperated and if you can do better than that anywhere, I'd like to see it done."

When Kirby returned to *The New Gods*, he picked up where he left off and ignored all of the stories that had been done in the intervening years by other creative hands. And D.C. agreed that the only stories that were to be considered a part of the saga were those done by Jack.

"I closed it out my way. Whatever I left, D.C. can go on with it if it likes. In comics they've proven that they can always resurrect characters. In other words, you can't kill a character in comics. Captain America himself was missing for a long time and I resurrected him (in the classic *Avengers* fourth issue). I'm sure they can find a way to resurrect Bucky. Dr. Doom has been resurrected about four times.

"So it's up to D.C. Whatever job I've done there, I've done it well. I've given them very, very good material. I've given them intriguing situations. I've given them representations of all of us and I feel that's never been done in comics. That's the way I feel as a human being. I've seen some have a great time and Ive seen some suffer. I do the stories because the gods represent all of us. Orion is the embodiment of all of our frustrations. Here is an evil god who's brought up by good people. Here is a murderer, a killer, who's brought up by wonderful good people in New Genesis. Can you imagine the frustration of Orion that makes him into the kind of killer that can't stop? He's a kind of ultimate destructor. Orion represents the people, the masses of people. If you frustrate him long enough, grind him down and get him into a frustrated mood, then you're going to get an explosion. It is about people."

Jack's next project is the already completed graphic novel *The Hunger Dogs*, a 62-page magnum opus.

"It's about us. It's about the people who seem unimportant in huge conflicts but who are really the most important, the masses, the ones who actually go out and win wars. They're the ones who are really important. If I were to do a movie, I'd do a picture on *The Hunger Dogs*. I wouldn't do a picture about a king or a prince because these are nothing by themselves. They're the power people. They're the ones that cause suffering. They're the ones that cause liberation but they don't do it by themselves. They're not the ones who win it or lose it. They're unimportant, really. You can take King Arthur and throw him out of the window.

"It's a theme that's never been used in comics. I don't think that it's a theme that's ever been used in anything before." He excitedly concludes, already anxious to see the reaction to his newest concept. "It's very important and it'll be a very good book."

At an age when most people are looking towards slowing down and retiring, Kirby is clearly just getting started on the latest round, still a creative dynamo, restless with daring new ideas. Ever the trendsetter, after five very productive decades in the field he is still a wellspring bubbling with new concepts and eager to put them down on paper for public inspection. He is not concerned with the approval or praise of his peers but with the response he will generate from the average purchaser of his latest wares. Rather than suffering the creative burnout common to so many in the field after four or five years, the fifty years Jack Kirby has labored seem only to have stoked Kirby's visionary fires into a raging inferno still more than capable of setting the four-color world of comic books ablaze.

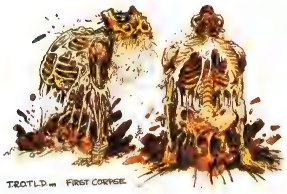
SEE KIRBY PORTFOLIO ON PAGE 62

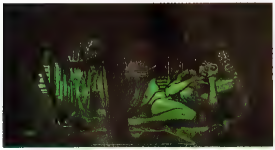
SPOTLIGHT

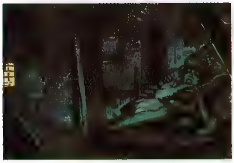
FROM MOVIES TO COMICS

And here we see a movie adapted to comic book form.

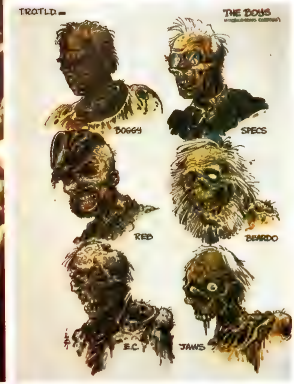
FROM COMICS TO MOVIES
THE ART OF WILLIAM STOUT







Bill Stout is a noted comic book and portfolio artist. He has also become very prominent among the talented and small group of movie production artists. Here we see how what he has visually conceived is transfered to the screen.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having discovered that their foes were all led by a single mastermind in a plot to destroy the Vision and Wonder Man.

Following the conclusion of this adventure, the West Coast Avengers (Hawkeye, Iron Man, Mockingbird, Wonder Man and Tigra) will return to their California headquarters. Hank Pym, formerly Ant Man (among other guises), will become a regular member of the cast.

A new member will be added to the team in the third issue. "I don't want to give away the surprise," Englehart commented, "But the new person will add even more raw power to the lineup, as well as extensive experience with teamwork."

Englehart commented that he would like to work with the **Avengers** writer Roger Stern to produce a combined East Coast/West Coast Avengers team-up each year. As for the jurisdiction of the two teams, he joked, "Hawkeye will decide that, since all New Yorkers think the universe ends at the Hudson River, everything west of New Jersey is the West Coast."

In **The Vision and the Scarlet Witch**, Englehart plans to draw strongly from the concept of the extended family, so inherent to the characters. "Wanda and the Vision know, or are related to, everyone in the Marvel universe," he noted, "So anyone could drop in unexpectedly while they 'just happen to be in town'".

Among those who will "drop in" are Quicksilver and his daughter Luna, The Inhumans, Magneto, the sorceress Agatha Harkness and Bova, the mid-wife from Wundagore. "Basically everybody," Englehart noted. "The Vision and Scarlet Witch have such a long, rich history, there is an incredible number of elements to draw from."

MEANWHILE AT DC...

Beginning with issue 188, **Green Lantern** will be written by Steve Englehart, pencilled by Joe Staton and inked by Bruce Patterson.

"I've read **Green Lantern** since it was in **Showcase**," said Steve Englehart. "To me, he was always the most human of comic book heroes. As (former **Comics Feature News Editor**) Kurt Busiek once said, 'Hal Jordan is one guy you could meet on the street and have a beer with'".

"Gil Kane's Green Lantern got me hooked on comics," said Joe Staton. "He flies better than anybody! When I started drawing him, it was my first chance to pencil a character whose hair blows around in the wind."

Both Staton and Englehart look forward to working together—again. "I like Joe's stuff a lot," said Steve. "We've worked together in other places and on other strips. As far as Green Lantern is concerned, I think Joe has probably drawn him almost as much as Gil Kane has. And I wrote **Justice League of America** and used Green Lantern there. When Dick(Giordano) offered the book to me, I was glad to take it."

Recently, Joe Staton, Steve Englehart and editor Andy Helfer got together in New York for a planning session. "There will be a lot of surprises in the next year for Green Lantern," commented Helfer. "We all agree that we want to keep the surprises coming. There will be major changes ahead starting with Steve and Joe's very first issue together. That will start a whole chain of events that, well...it's gonna be great."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

across the centuries to help them. In transit to 5700 A.D., however, he lost all memory of his own life. The scientists of the future gave him a false memory, an invented identity as asteroid-explorer Pol Manning, secretly Green Lantern of the 58th Century, and a lover named Iona Vane (GL 8, Oct. 1961). Many times GL would be pulled to the future, each time to pick up the threads of his second life and continue living where he had left off, before returning to Carol and Pieface and his Hal Jordan identity in the 20th Century.

Such innovations made Green Lantern an instant hit. A straw poll of readers published in *Green Lantern #3* showed him to be, for the moment, DC's most popular hero, with 888 votes to Superman's 600; Flash followed with 521, Batman with 512. Schwartz had scored twice now with his new, improved heroes. It was time to revive what many considered the greatest Golden Age comic of all.

THE JUSTICE LEAGUE

"Just imagine!" read the ads. "The mightiest heroes of our time have banded together as the Justice League of America to stamp out the forces of evil wherever and whenever they appear! America resounds to the trumpet-like blasts of their names...Superman! Batman! Flash! Green Lantern! Wonder Woman! Aquaman! Manhunter from Mars!"

This successor to the old Justice Society of America was Schwartz's most ambitious project yet. In this team he was entrusted not only with his own two heroes but with five from the stables of other editors: Weisinger's Superman, Robert Kanigher's Wonder Woman and Schiff's Batman, Aquaman and Martian Manhunter, to be joined in Issue 4 (May 1961) by a fourth Schiff hero, Green Arrow. Only one writer could have been assigned to such a comic: Gardner F. Fox.

From Fox's imagination in 1939 had sprung the original Flash, Hawkman, the Sandman, Dr. Fate and Starman, the core of Sheldon Mayer's stable of heroes. Through the 1940s he poured out story after story about these colorful crimefighters, earning him a solid place in Golden Age history. More than anything else, however, his work was distinguished by his 58-page, four-times-a-year tales of his heroes combined adventures in the Justice Society. Fox invented the idea of a super-hero team, and although the JSA was often copied during the 1940s, it was never equalled.

When Schwartz picked Fox to write the new Justice League he affirmed the continuity of super-hero comics. It was a thrilling moment for DC's older fans. And there were signs—letters from grateful adults scattered throughout the country—that the number of those fans was steadily growing. With his intelligent sense of fun, Schwartz was beginning to reach an audience who would normally have put comic books behind them. Taste and discrimination had usually been strangers to the world of super-heroes, but now some readers were beginning to apply them to that strange genre of popular entertainment. Gardner Fox made sure that the Justice League would not disappoint them.

Fox had to refine his plotting style for the modern team. Economics had shrunk comic stories from 57 pages to 23, for one thing, and editorial standards were higher. In the early days of comics the mere idea of odd hero battling odd villain had been enough for most kids, so that a typical story just ran from conflict to conflict on artless enthusiasm. But Schwartz would no longer accept such simplicity. He took to calling himself "B.O. Schwartz" in the 1960s; "B.O." for "Be Original". Originality was the one criterion he demanded of every story by each of his writers.

Fox fell short in the JLA's first ten adventures, which follow a rigid formula carried over from the 1940s: A menace creates disasters in three exotic corners of the world; the JLA splits up into three teams, each of which overcomes its particular challenge; at the end the heroes rejoin to defeat the villain himself. But by the end of 1961 Fox had broken his self-imposed bonds and turned his great imagination to charting unique and devious plots that played endless variations on a single theme, that the heroes must triumph by brain, not brawn. In the typical plot, a baffling mystery confronts our heroes in the opening pages; in unravelling it they fall prey to some super-scientific or magical schemer; and by the last few pages they are caught in a seemingly inescapable plight. Then, just when all seems lost, one hero unveils a brilliant plan—and the villain is undone.

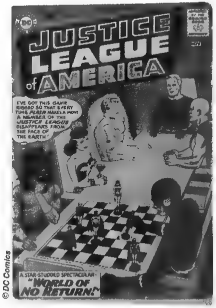
In a classic example of this device, a trio of evil sorcerers has developed a set of spells, each perfectly attuned to paralyse a particular Justice League member. There seems to be no way to escape these spells until Aquaman has an inspiration: "Suppose each of us looked like some other member? For instance, I could look like Superman—and Superman could look like me! Then the sorcerers' spells—since they're always directed against individuals—couldn't hurt us!" Green Lantern's power ring performs the camouflage. Ingeniously, the heroes simulate each

other's powers—Aquaman, masquerading as Superman, has hidden whales and octopi destroy a ship while he pretends to destroy it with super-strength—and the deception is maintained until the sorcerers are vanquished (JLA #11, May 1962).

Fox's plots always walked a strange line between predictability on the one hand and incoherent anarchy on the other. Perhaps no comic has ever posed as many difficulties to its writer as the JLA, especially in those days, when editorial policy did not allow stories to continue from one issue to the next. Fox had to sacrifice characterization almost completely to fit his complex plots into one comic, to the point that the liveliest personality on the team was their stereotypical teen hipster mascot, Snapper Carr. Sometimes the convolutions of the plot seemed arbitrary and the extraordinarily wordy story-telling became cumbersome. But in his best moments, and they were many, Fox made the Justice League the examplar of how well a comic book can be plotted.

It was also an irresistable title to kids. Not only did it have all our favorite heroes under one cover, but Fox gave his stories so many ingeniously ludicrous quirks that we would gasp and laugh simultaneously. In his mind a carnival fun-house could be the gateway to another world, its concave and convex mirrors actually transforming our heroes into the ridiculous shapes they reflected (JLA #7, Nov. 1961). In his mind an ordinary automobile from our science-based universe could be an unstoppable weapon in a universe that runs on the principles of magic, just as a magic spell would be in ours (JLA #2, Jan. 1961).

This last story contains a scene that showcases artist Mike Sekowsky's eye for humor: A group of inter-dimensional thieves are shown loading the goose that lays the golden eggs, the fairy gold that vanishes each dawn and the sword Excalibur into the trunk of a big yellow Pontiac. Sekowsky's peculiar figures, comical touch and ability to master difficult problems of layout served him well in the strange world of the JLA. It became a cliche among fans who defended "Big Mike" to praise his skill at cramming a horde of heroes and villains into a single panel. But it was true and making such busy layouts dynamic was no easy task. More than that, he could take whatever plot intricacies Fox threw at him and give them graphic sense. Sekowsky may never have been pretty, especially with the stiff inking of Bernard Sachs, but he always told one hell of a story.



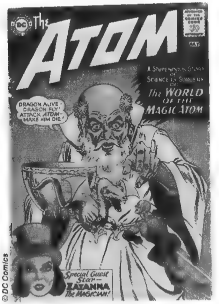
With the Justice League the Schwartz revival campaign was fully launched. In the next year-and-a-half Gardner Fox would take on three more assignments that, though none were as successful as the first three revivals, would prove beyond a doubt that a good super-hero could not be kept down.

HAWKMAN

A Fox creation from 1939, Hawkman was a flying hero who wore a massive hawk-mask, talked with birds and fought modern crime with weapons of the past, including maces, crossbows and whatever else Fox's research could turn up. The Hawkman of 1961 was a further extension of the theme, a super-scientific humanoid policeman from the planet Thanagar, visiting Earth in order to study our law enforcement methods. He masqueraded as museum curator Carter Hall, a human identity which often led him into cases involving ancient artifacts and lost civilizations. This dual role enabled him to battle crime with the weapons of the past, the detective procedures of the present, and the science of the future. His role as an earthling was made easier by a unique Fox invention, a device called the Absorbacon, which transmitted all earthly knowledge on any given subject telepathically to its user.

Hawkman's most interesting feature, however, was Hawkgirl. His wife, fellow police officer and associate curator, she was his equal partner in the battle with crime. Fox never even seemed to consider keeping her in the background, as she fought beside her husband with wits and wings and fists; and sometimes, when Hawkman was incapacitated, the final victory was hers alone. Hawkgirl, also known as Shiera Hall, joined level-headed Iris West and willful Carol

HIGH-FLYING THRILLS AND ACTION!
HAWKMAN
12¢
EXTRA! A SPECIAL FIRST APPEARANCE!
THE WINGED WONDER RETURNS IN AN ADVENTURE THAT MOBILIZES SUPER-ELEMENTS OF NATURE!
MASTER TRAP of the MASTER RACES!
© DC Comics


The ATOM
A Shipwreck's Ghost Seance to Summon
The WORLD OF THE MAGIC ATOM
DRAGON ALIVE CHAOS IN ATOMIC SPACE HIM DIE
Special Guest Star — ZATANNA the MAGICIAN!
© DC Comics

Ferris in the ranks of Schwartz's gutsy professional women. Together, she and Hawkman marked the first married super-heroes in comics.

For many fans they also marked the true return of the Golden Age. The letter page of Hawkman's first appearance—in The Brave and the Bold, a former adventure comic converted into a second *Showcase* (BB#34, Mar. 1961)—featured a reminiscence of the old Hawkman by Gardner Fox, and a trio of letters from old-time fans ecstatic over rumors of the Winged Wonder's return. All of them were from adults, one of whom was Roy Thomas, soon to be one of the key figures in the birth of organized comic fandom.

Although sparking great enthusiasm among the older set, Hawkman apparently failed to enthrall the children who comprise the bulk of DC's readership. After a three-issue run in *The Brave and the Bold* his sales were not quite adequate to justify his own comic. Schwartz, in his fondness for the character, gave him another three issue try-out a year later (BB #s 42-44, Jul-Nov 1962), but again sales fell short.

Perhaps the concept of a bird-man wasn't exciting enough in an increasingly technological age, as the strip's second artist, Murphy Anderson, would suggest. Or perhaps his slow start came because he was both blessed and cursed by the art of Joe Kubert. Kubert was a natural choice, having drawn Hawkman in the late 1940s, but in the intervening decade he had turned his art away from super-heroes to become DC's principal artist of war and adventure stories. He was not regularly a member of the Schwartz stable and so did not share the dynamic simplicity of Infantino and Kane. His unique, almost impressionistic use of line and shading baffled many of Schwartz's fans; the question of whether Kubert was right for Hawkman was the first serious issue to rise in DC's letter pages. Most of the older readers answered yes, many younger ones said no, while a few made a finer distinction: Kubert was a superb artist whose style simply wasn't right for the kinds of stories Gardner Fox was telling.

Whatever Schwartz's opinions, when Hawkman and Hawkgirl came back for their third try-out, this time backing up Adam Strange in *Mystery in Space* (frim MIS #87, Nov. 1963), they were drawn by the radically different Anderson, and this time the series took.

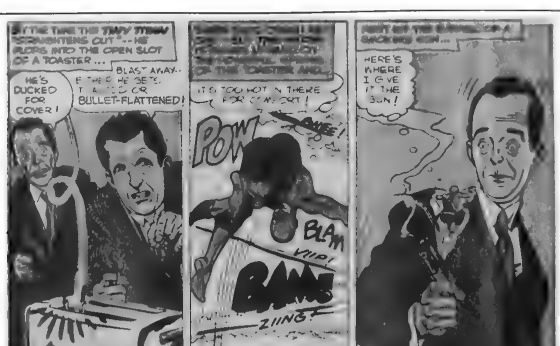
THE FIRST FLASH RETURNS

Six months after Hawkman's debut, DC's older fans were given a treat served up especially for them, when Jay Garrick, the original Flash of the 1940s returned. When Schwartz conceived this comeback, he had no idea how to make that ten-years-gone hero—about whom Barry Allen had been reading in a comic book in his origin story back in 1956—a real character in his new universe. Fox conquered the problem by imagining a second earth, existing in the same space as our own but "vibrating at a different speed", with a history closely paralleling ours except for the year in which super-heroes first appeared. There the year was 1938, and the heroes were those of the Golden Age, not 1956 as in our world. When Barry Allen accidentally super-vibrated to this Earth II, he found his boyhood comic book hero still living—older, gray at the temples, a little short on stamina, but still living—and still running fast (F #123, Sept. 1961).

For the older readers, this story, "Flash of Two Worlds", brought the delightful surprise that their old favorites had not been abandoned. But for the younger ones it brought perhaps an even bigger thrill. True, they might not have known that there ever was an earlier Flash, but here was a new world, a world potentially chock-full of new super-heroes. And by now it was growing clear that that was what they wanted.

GREAT THINGS IN SMALL PACKAGES

Schwartz and Fox's last revival of that period was a departure, owing less to its Golden Age namesake than any of the preceding superhero revivals. "BIG—Big—BIG NEWS" read the ads, "about a SMALL—Small-small super-hero...The ATOM." In the 1940s the Atom had been a minor hero with no super-powers just a tough scrapper of a small stature who seemed to stand in for Everyman in the DC pantheon. In the science-minded atmosphere of 1961, however, the name suggested a



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completely different type of hero, one who could actually reduce himself in size from six feet to six inches and all the way down to the sub-atomic level.

Research scientist Ray Palmer discovers that he can control his size and mass by bathing himself in the emanations of a white dwarf star. With his "size and weight controls" he finds he can keep his weight at its full 180 pounds even at six inches high, or reduce himself to the weight of a feather. By shrinking himself to the size of an electron he can travel as part of an electronic impulse through telephone wires to any place in the world. He knows immediately that he will use his powers to fight crime, and thanks to the fact that his girlfriend is a lawyer, he finds himself contacting a wide spectrum of theives, hoodlums and spies from the very beginning (Show. #34, Oct. 1961).

The concept of the Atom set him immediately apart from the rest of the super-hero crowd. Where everyone else was bigger, stronger, faster than life, the Atom was smaller, forcing both him and Gardner Fox to rely heavily on their wits. To bring down a thug, for example, the Atom might waft into the air at feather weight, increase his weight suddenly, bounce off a convenient rubber eraser and then drive his tiny fist into the crook's jaw with this full 180 pounds behind it (Atom #4, Jan. 1963). Such scenes gave artist Gil Kane an opportunity to show off his growing facility for action, while Murphy Anderson's inking gave the strip a tidy, everyday flavor that accented the charm of the Tiny Titan.

Although never so surprising as the *Justice League*, as grandiose as *Green Lantern* or as wildly imaginative as *Flash*, the early issues of *The Atom* set a standard for ceaseless invention and variation on the theme of smallness that made them gems of children's entertainment. Fox came up with a Rogue's Gallery of his own for the series, including such gimmick-foes as Dr. Light and Chronos, the Time-Wise Guy. But his best stories often came with little mysteries, neat as clockwork and surprising as a jack-in-the-box, about off-beat court cases (for which Fox's law degree came in very handy) or "impossible" burglaries. He also gave us another tough, charming Schwartz heroine in the person of lady lawyer Jean Loring, and a twist on the usual comic book romance: In this case it is Ray Palmer who proposes marriage every issue and Jean who puts him off for the sake of her career.

The *Showcase* issues featuring the Atom in 1961 sold well enough to earn him his own title and the question raised by Flash had been answered. All across America, in drug stores, supermarkets, candy stores and newsstands, kids were casting their votes with the dimes they dug up from their pockets. They voted yes on superheroes. Now there could be no doubt that the best of them would live again. While just around the corner, as yet unknown to these veterans and followers of the Golden Age, a whole new breed of hero was getting ready to emerge.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

DAILY
SATURDAY JULY 11, 1936
CELEBRITIES VISIT PALOOKA CAMP
JOE KAYOS FOUR SPARRING PARTNERS
IN ORDER TO SHOW HIS APPRECIATION, WHEN MANY FAMOUS STARS VISITED HIM TO DAY, PALOOKA GAVE A RE-MARKABLE EXHIBITION BY PLATTENING FOUR HUSKIES IN 2 ROW. AMONG THE VISITORS WERE, TALULLAH BANKHEAD, JIMMY DUNN, LIONEL BARRYMORE, LAT STANDWYH (WHO BROUGHT HIS ORCHESTRA) STOOPNAGLE
ED. SULLIVAN, JACK PEARL, ONE-EYED CONNELLY, SHEMP HOWARD, HAROLD LLOYD, GENE TUNNEY AND BARNEY ROSS.
JOE PALOOKA
JOE: I WOULD LOVE TO GET THE AUTOGRAPHS OF YOUR CELEBRATED FRIENDS FOR MY NEPHEW.
WHY CERTAINLY I'LL BE GLAD TO SIT 'EM FER THE LITTLE FELLA.
IF YOU'LL PUT THE AUTOGRAPHS YOU GOT FER YALAH DON'T MIX IN, SO-TO I'LL SQUEAL.
DEFORE I DO I WANT AN INCRIMINATING SOUVENIR!

Fisher was known for his use of celebrities and parody—here we see Senator Weldebottom in this story continuity.

Idea for Joe Palooka hit him like an atomic bomb and he yelled, 'I've got it', and in his excitement pushed his inspiration right through the plate glass window and without stopping to explain ran to the newspaper office where he did the first strip of Joe Palooka." That, with variations over the years, was Fisher's tale of the strip's inception.

The story of how a much-rejected strip came to be one of America's most popular and widely syndicated is even more fantastic—but verifiably true. Fisher got a job as a salesman at McNaught, where Charles V. McAdam, the president of that syndicate, seemed on the verge of taking on Palooka. Going on the road, Fisher proved his sales ability by placing another McNaught strip, Dixie Dugan, in 30 papers in 40 days. As Bill Blackbeard puts it, "Tackling his own Palooka next, Fisher sold it to 20 papers in three weeks...(returning) to find McAdam almost more interested in making Fisher the McNaught Sales Manager than in publishing Palooka." Fisher declined and, as Blackbeard says, "true to his early ambition, stuck to the strip."

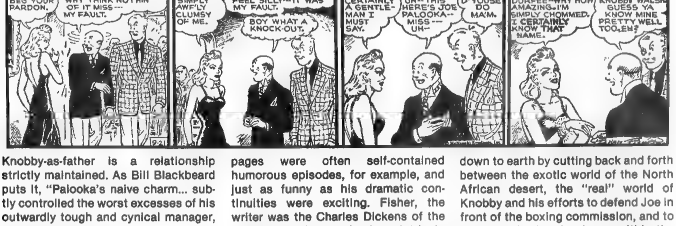
This Horatio Alger-like story, of one small boy's large drive to make it big, was the stuff of comic-strip soap opera; and that, largely is what Palooka was. Crudely drawn at first, and energetically but amateurishly written, Palooka took half a decade to find itself, and a full decade to hit its stride. The strip began appearing in 1928, but did not build any sort of following until 1931, when the New York *Mirror* picked it up. These were the early days of the adventure strip, and Fisher's early continuity writing showed the influence of Harold Gray, Sidney Smith and particularly Roy Crane. His artwork was initially an ungainly transposition of big-foot Mutt and Jeff-type technique into the more real world of the continuity; by the early '30s, when such assistants as Al Capp and Moe Leff began helping out, the artwork improved, somehow joining the cartoony faces of Palooka and Knobby Walsh with a vaguely illustrative, more realistic approach. The final result was a style that became home to Palooka and Li'l Abner, a style put into marginally more realistic practice in the former, though such Fisher characters as Senator Weldebottom would have been most at home in the latter.

Despite rumors that Fisher did no drawing on the strip, the faces of the main characters seem largely his—and this is true as late as 1955, the final Fisher year of the strip. His friend and fellow cartoonist, Morris Weiss, says Fisher was an excellent caricaturist, and wouldn't allow anyone else to touch certain faces, especially those of Palooka and Knobby Walsh. The strip's verisimilitude (and Fisher's ego) was fed by frequently featuring real-life celebrities in the strip, and Fisher usually did their caricatures himself. (Examination of Palooka originals bears this out; the cartoony faces of Palooka, Knobby and others are clearly the work of a seperate hand—specifically, an artist using a pen, not a brush. Once Leff takes over entirely—upon Fisher's death—Palooka, Knobby and other "cartoony" characters take on a slick, slightly soulless look.)

From the beginning, though, the writing was what set the strip apart. Fisher was also influenced by sources outside comics, particularly the sports fiction of Ring Lardner and the Broadway tales of Damon Runyon; and soon the trademark of the strip was the blow-by-blow, ringside announcer narration of Fisher's hard-hitting, convincing, suspenseful, often wildly-staged prizefighters. Sylvester Stallone *must* have read Joe Palooka, growing up.

Also, from the start Fisher had a bead on his two main characters: Palooka and his manager Knobby Walsh. While the Palooka cast was unusually large, and each cast member appropriately distinct, the thrust of the strip remained the odd father-and-son relationship between Knobby and Palooka. The standard love story between lowborn Palooka and highborn Ann Howe generated interest, certainly. The various machinations of fate (and Fisher) to keep the lovers apart (such as Ann Howe's post-war disappearance) made for compelling comic-strip soap-opera, culminating in a widely-publicized comics marriage in 1949. But the heart of Palooka is *not* Ann and Joe's love story: It's the love of two seemingly ill-matched men—Knobby and Joe.

What makes this father-and-son relationship an oddly affecting one is that the roles reverse, often. Older street-smart Knobby many times plays child to the younger, humane, rustic Palooka. On the surface, though,


JOE PALOOKA
By Ham Fisher
OH, I BEG YOUR PARDON—
WHY DON'TCHA UH—WHY THINK NOTHIN' OF IT MISS—IT WASS MY FAULT.
IT WAS SIMPLY AWFUL'Y CLUMSY OF ME.
NOW YER MAKIN' ME FEEL SILLY—IT WAS MY FAULT.
BOY WHAT A KNOCK-OUT!
YOU'RE CERTAINLY A GENTLE-MAN I MUST SAY.
THANKS. UH—THIS HERE'S JOE PALOOKA—MISS—UH—
HOW D'YOUSE DO MA'M.
DURREE—ADELLE DURREE—WHY HOW AMAZINGLIN SIMPLY CHOMMED, I CERTAINLY KNOW THAT NAME.
AN' I'M KNOBBY WALSH. GUESS YA KNOW MINE PRETTY WELL TOOLEH?

Knobby-as-father is a relationship strictly maintained. As Bill Blackbeard puts it, "Palooka's naive charm... subtly controlled the worst excesses of his outwardly tough and cynical manager, Knobby Walsh."

When Knobby goes too far, Palooka puts his foot down. Once, during a title match in Scotland (a 1935 continuity), Knobby stuck a knife into the bagpipe being played by one of the Scottish challenger's seconds, causing the Scottish fighter to glance away just long enough for Joe to clobber him. Afterwards Joe refused to speak to Knobby for day-upon-day until finally Knobby agreed to "apologize" to all concerned. The simple, dignified humanity of Palooka has often been derided; but the masses embraced this naive but humane and instinctively wise fighter. In retrospect Palooka seems a refreshing change from anti-heroes. He makes one nostalgic for a Norman Rockwell sort of era that may never really have existed at all.

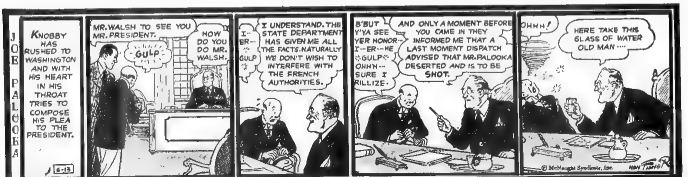
So if Palooka is a love story, it's a love story between Knobby and Joe—and if Ann Howe figures in, it's to create a triangle, as she attempts sweetly to convince Joe to quit fighting, while Knobby works relentlessly to keep his boy in the ring.

Palooka is not an easy strip to reduce to a formula, however, because in its heyday (1935 to 1950) it was a glorious Mulligan's stew of adventure, sports action, soap opera, satire and slapstick. If he wandered into the maudlin at times (as with Little Max), Fisher could be forgiven, considering his impressive range—his Sunday pages were often self-contained humorous episodes, for example, and just as funny as his dramatic continuities were exciting. Fisher, the writer was the Charles Dickens of the continuity strip, weaving long, intricate narratives, one story flowing naturally out of another, stories inevitably flowing out of the characters themselves. He is truly the rival to Harold Gray, and made use of a wider, richer landscape.

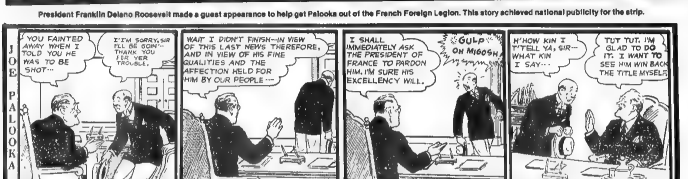
For example. In 1939 Fisher takes Palooka to Hollywood, where (echoing such real-life sports figures as Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey and Joe Louis) Joe takes on an acting role. One of Knobby's weaknesses is women, and a beautiful but conniving young actress, angry at Palooka for rebuffing her, convinces Knobby that Palooka has been making passes. Crushed and angry, Knobby quits as Joe's manager and tells Ann Howe that her beloved beau is a "philanderer". After a disasterous exhibition tour minus Knobby, a dejected Joe and his trainer Smoky (a stereotypically drawn but sympathetically handled black) enlist in the foreign legion! A wonderful series of high adventure in the North African desert follows; meanwhile, back home, Knobby hopes to find Joe and (having found out about the young actress' deceptions) patch things up with him. Also, because on the ill-fated exhibition tour Joe had walked away from a fight rather than K.O. his helpless opponent, Palooka has (unknown to him) had his championship title taken away.

Fisher masterfully keeps his strip down to earth by cutting back and forth between the exotic world of the North African desert, the "real" world of Knobby and his efforts to defend Joe in front of the boxing commission, and to locate and bring Joe home within the 90-day time frame the commission grants him (for reinstatement of Palooka's title). The 1939-40 period reveals Fisher's Palooka to be a complex, sprawling, picaresque novel, with a modernday Candide as its hero. (Li'l Abner is, in many ways, a sly, sometimes mean-spirited parody of the Palooka approach.)

In a letter from Ham Fisher to Vincent Sullivan, editor of Columbia Comic Corporation (actually written for the benefit of the readers of the first issue of the Joe Palooka comic book, the letter being reproduced as the full, first page of the comic), Fisher discusses his approach: "I had gotten Joe into the Foreign Legion and did not know how to get him out. You know I strive for authenticity and there was only one way in which I could get Joe out and still be 'according to Hoyle'. That way was to have the President of the United States write a letter to the President of France and ask him to give Palooka a release from the Foreign Legion... well, I called my old friend, Steve Early, the President's secretary, and told him of my dilemma. Steve made a date for me to come down to Washington and get an actual letter from President Roosevelt to the President of France, asking for Joe's release... the use of the President for the first time in a comic strip created a furor and *Time, Life, Colliers,*


JOE PALOOKA
KNOBBY HAS RUSHED TO WASHINGTON AND WITH HIS HEART IN HIS THROAT TRIES TO COMPOSE HIS PLEA TO THE PRESIDENT.
MR. WALSH TO SEE YOU MR. PRESIDENT.
GULP!
HOW DO YOU DO MR. WALSH.
I UNDERSTAND THIS STATE DEPARTMENT HAS GIVEN ME ALL THE FACTS. NATURALLY WE DON'T WISH TO INTERFERE WITH THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES.
B'BUT Y'VA SEE YER HONOR I--ER--HE GOULP! OHNN-- SURE IT WILLIZE.
AND ONLY A MOMENT BEFORE YOU CAME IN THEY INFORMED ME THAT A LAST MOMENT DISPATCH ADVISED THAT MR. PALOOKA DESERTED AND IS TO BE SHOT.
OHHH!
HERE TAKE THIS GLASS OF WATER OLD MAN---
© McNaught Syndicate, Inc.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt made a guest appearance to help get Palooka out of the French Foreign Legion. This story achieved national publicity for the strip.


JOE PALOOKA
YOU FAINTED AWAY WHEN I TOLD YOU HE WAS TO BE SHOT--
I'M SORRY, SIR I'LL BE GOIN'-- THANK YOU FER YER TROUBLE
WAIT! I DIDN'T FINISH--IN VIEW OF THIS LAST NEWS THEREFORE, AND IN VIEW OF HIS FINE QUALITIES AND THE AFFECTION HELD FOR HIM BY OUR PEOPLE---
© McNaught Syndicate, Inc.
I SHALL IMMEDIATELY ASK THE PRESIDENT OF FRANCE TO PARDON HIM. I'M SURE HIS EXCELLENCY WILL.
GULP OH MIGOSH
H'HOW KIN I Y'TELL YA, SIR-- WHAT KIN I SAY---
TUT TUT. I'M GLAD TO DO IT. I WANT TO SEE HIM WIN BACK THE TITLE MYSELF.

Newsweek and most of the papers throughout the country carried stories about it. I was also forced to talk about the incident on many network interviews."

One imagines that self-promoter Fisher was somehow able to bear up under being "forced to talk" on national radio shows. But Palooka's poppa was not exaggerating: there was a publicity storm over the President's appearance in the strip; and soon after, when in late 1940 Palooka enlists in the army rather than go back to the ring, even more publicity followed.

During World War Two, the strip went to war; in his patented fashion, Fisher cut back and forth between the home front (where, for example, Knobby took a job in a plant doing war-related work) and Palooka's experiences as a combat soldier. These are often surprisingly brutal war stories, taking Joe through the African and French campaigns, into Yugoslavia and the South Pacific. Palooka spends much time with wiseguy Jerry Leemy and French-Canadian Bateese (whose dialect allowed him to say "Damn"—"tam!"), and gave many a philosophical speech about democracy and war. Returning to the site of his foreign legion adventures, Joe tells his friend Ibi Ben Abou (an Arabian despot who, due to Joe's influence, turns his country into a democracy and is then elected president!), "It seems to me the only thing that causes war is one man's believe that his own kinda worship an' ancestry are better than others. Oh golly—I wish a lot of people would realize how simple it is." Ibi Ben Abou nods and says, "Children know it. It's a pity that they lose the common touch."

Joe's homespun philosophizing jars us today, taken in a context of the wholesale Jap and Nazi killing the clean-cut lad was indulging in at the time. But to me the sentiments seem sincere. The Palooka strip has heart; as does Palooka himself.

I cannot bring myself to feel that Fisher was cynical man who was pandering to the public, feeding them homilies he himself scorned. Inside the small, vain, Jewish, streetwise Fisher lived the big, modest, WASP, homespun Palooka. There may have been an inner conflict between them—not unlike the one between Joe and Knobby. Fisher was undoubtedly more Knobby than Joe, in the practice of his life. Somehow one can imagine Knobby, in desperate straits, putting a gun to his head—Joe, never.

But Joe did live in Fisher. And the efforts of Fisher's longtime assistant, Moe Leff, to continue PALOOKA, were the surprise failure of the comics business. Less than five years into a widely-publicized big-money contract to continue PALOOKA, Leff left. His work on the strip, minus Fisher, was solid-but it didn't click with the public. Perhaps it was the shadow of suicide on the strip. Perhaps the sweet, simple Palooka had been somehow invalidated by his creator's self-

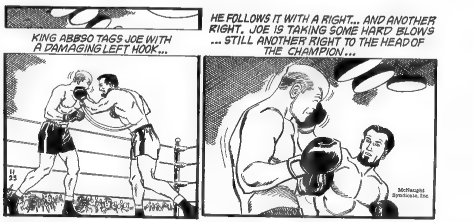
destruction.

Why did Fischer commit suicide? The answer to that question is an uncomfortably shady one.

Fisher, as we've seen, was inordinately concerned about his public image. He was also bitterly jealous of the success of his former assistant, Al Capp. Capp assisted Fisher in the early '30s, including work on a sequence about hillbillies, namely a character called Big Leviticus. Capp's LI'L ABNER is, of course, a reworking of Big Leviticus, and Fisher publicly resented this appropriation of what he deemed his creation. Capp claimed equally publicly, to have created Big Leviticus and the other hillbillies, claiming to have been Fisher's "ghost" at the time. This Fisher denied. Capp, a great cartoonist but not a great human being (a description equally applicable to Fisher), probably DID do most of the artwork on Big Leviticus; but Fisher probably wrote it. Whatever the case, it was produced under Fisher's aegis, so Fisher's reaction is at least understandable.

What is not understandable is why these two prominent comic-strip world figures conducted their feud in public, nor why that feud ran so deep. Both of them needled the other within their respective strips, Capp once naming a horse "Ham's Nose-Bob," in reference to some recent Fisher cosmetic surgery. Fisher reused the Big Leviticus characters, with constant banners reminding the reader who originated such hillbilly comic folk Capp wrote nasty articles about Fisher(one for Atlantic, in the late '40s was called, "I Remember Monster"). Fisher fumed.

Then came a strange and tragic episode. In the midst of the early '50s drive against sex and violence in comics (in which Dr. Frederic 'Wertham was instrumental), Fisher used very bad judgment by putting together a portfolio of "offensive" Al Capp ABNER strips, and showing them to newspaper editors and congressmen and the like. Capp did indeed sneak


KING ABBSO TAGS JOE WITH A DAMAGING LEFT HOOK...
HE FOLLOWS IT WITH A RIGHT... AND ANOTHER RIGHT. JOE IS TAKING SOME HARD BLOWS ... STILL ANOTHER RIGHT TO THE HEAD OF THE CHAMPION...
McNaught Syndicate, Inc.

This is an example of Tony DiPretas' version of Joe Palooka.

mildly smutty material into the strip (not to mention overtly sexy women). Among Capp's fetishes were the recurrent use of the number "69," phallic mushrooms and vagina-like knotholes. These Fisher gleefully pointed out; but - and here is the amazing part - he doctored some of the Capp strips, to emphasize the "pornographic" elements he saw there. Irritated to begin with by Fisher adding fuel to the anti-comics fire, the National Cartoonists Society caught wind of Fisher forgeries, expelled him from the organization, and, shortly after (on December 27, 1955), Fisher killed himself. Some years later a sex scandal destroyed Al Capp's similarly carefully crafted public image, and soon he too met his karma.

It is hard to convince anyone younger than 35 of just how popular PALOOKA once was. That it was the PEANUTS, the GARFIELD, the DOONESBURY of its day. That it was more popular that TERRY AND THE PIRATES and DICK TRACY and BLONDIE. That it generated movies, radio and TV shows, and countless toys and other licensing, including a monthly comic book of its own and yet more monthly comic books devoted to its supporting characters (LITTLE MAC AND HUMPHREY). That PALOOKA, and, to a slightly lesser extent Ham Fisher himself, were household words.

Whatever happened to JOE PALOOKA?

Well, Tony DiPreta has done an intelligent, cleanlydrawn version of PALOOKA since the late '50s. For many years DiPreta's scripts were provided by cartoonist Morris Weiss (MICKEY FINN), who had been a friend of Fisher's and provided some very Fisher-like continuities, including a fine sequence in the '60s in which a white Caslus Clay takes Palooka's title away. About ten years ago DiPreta took over the writing and the strip still appeared in a few papers, until its recent demise.

But the spirit of these characters seems to be something only Fisher could bring fully alive. He believed in his large, eccentric cast. He believed - or wanted to believe - in Joe's goodhearted optimism; and shared - or wanted to share - Joe's love for democracy.

As Coulton Waugh put it, "The great quality that lifts the (PALOOKA) strip to the very tip is simply the heart in it, the human love...(Joe Palooka) doesn't go out of his way to be good, it's just in him. He reacts with greatness because he can't help it."

Fisher, flawed human being that he obviouly was, never achieved the personal greatness of his fictional fighter. He took his own life because he couldn't help it.

But he was a champion of the comics, nevertheless.

IF WE HAD A WAY TO KNOCK IT OUT!...
I COULD USE MY TIARA, STEVE, BUT I NEED BOTH HANDS TO KEEP THOSE DEADLY BLASTS AWAY!
STILL, IT'S JUST A HOLDING ACTION! AS LONG AS THESE DESTRUCTIVE RAYS KEEP COMING IN, I CAN'T LOOK!
THEN LET ME GIVE IT A TRY!
I'VE ONLY SO ONE GUESS AT DOC!
LOOK?
GREAT GODDESSES! JUST DO IT!
WOULD IT HELP IF I SAID "ARTEMIS GUIDE MY AIM"?
©DC Comics

up their phone, offer you more money, and you were gone! Let's face it, it happens everywhere, in all professions. What are you going to stay there for? A gold star? A pat on the back?

"These days, it's actually better to work for Marvel, because of a thing that DC first instituted, and that's the royalty basis. Now Marvel is selling so much better that all these guys are getting royalties—a percentage of the sales. Not many (at DC) are getting it, though. *Teen Titans* is, for example. You have to be selling over 100,000 issues. Then they start making money like it was going out of style!

"Those days, when I moved over, that was a time when people were going under different names. People who were working for DC were also working for Marvel under pseudonyms. I never changed my name! I stayed with Marvel all that time. Sometimes inkers would work under different names for each company, but it was baloney—everybody knew they were doing it anyway!

"I left Marvel in 1977," he said. "When I came over to DC, the first comic I did was *Wonder Woman*. I got pulled off it 'cause they didn't like what I was doing! Someone else was inking it—Vince Coletta. He was art director at that time, so what could I say to him? But I didn't like it. He was very fast, could just bang it out, and he had someone doing backgrounds. He did a good job over Kirby, but I guess it depends who they're inking over."

Understandably, he is very concerned about inkers. "An inker can take artwork and destroy it," he said. "I have very seldom seen an inker make artwork better." I mentioned one of my own favorites, Tom Palmer. "Well, Tom's an *artist*!" he replied, with a grin.

"Ink style is like handwriting," he said, showing me pages of his work, and instantly identifying the inkers who had finished it. "This one was 'Brett Breeding and friends'. (*Justice League of America #202*). It was a group, a production table. In other words, one guy may do some backgrounds, another guy will do heads, another guy will finish this or that.

"This one is *Aquaman*, inked by Bob Smith. He was having a ball with this one! Look at all the detail, all the scales on his costume. He did a very nice job on that."

We returned to talking about his *Wonder Woman* work, and I mentioned the show with Lynda Carter. "I would like to make her look like Lynda Carter," he admitted. "She's pretty enough, but I don't have enough pictures of her. But art's like handwriting again—after you've drawn so many, they all start to look like someone you've known from long ago."

TECHNIQUE

We turned to discussing how he actually does his artwork. Obviously, first he receives the script for the story in question. It can either be with completed dialog or just a synopsis, which is generally fairly detailed. He showed me the last one he had just received, for *Wonder Woman*. The script was very detailed as to what was happening, and by it were numbers added in pen. "This is a synopsis," he explained. "I break it down like that: that's panel one to me, that's panel two and so on."

Then he pulled out a sheet of drawing paper, which had boxes roughed in, and lots of pencilled lines, almost stick figures, and spaces for word balloons. "Complicated? This is the way I start it. In other words, I do one of these drawings, in pencil, and I rough it out very lightly. Then I draw over it. I slip it under a light box, and I lay a sheet of paper over it. From this I draw it out on the paper. I make more corrections as I'm working along with it.

"You should do two pages a day," he reflected. "Sometimes I'm a lot slower than that, depending on how many characters I have to draw. If I only have to do heads, for example, it's easy. But sometimes it's very complicated." He showed me a page of his artwork for *JLA #216*, the final part of their adventure in the Microcosm. It was a huge battle scene, and very complex. "You see, you have some people in the foreground, an army come up, and you *still!* have to show a background—where the hell it all is taking place!"

He showed me some other pages from *JLA #198-199*, his first strip for the magazine. "Brett Breeding inked it," he explained. "A young fellow, pretty good. The only thing was, he wasn't too good at horses. I drew those horses from good horses, and he made them look like they should have had rockers under them!"

I asked him if he did the word balloons also. "No. If it's a storyline job, I don't put words in. It gets sent to the letterer, and to the writer, who

UH-OH, THAT RHINOCEROS MEANS BUSINESS!
BUT MY MAGIC LASSO WILL KEEP HIM ALL TIED UP—
—WHILE I DEAL WITH HIS MISTRESS!
IT'S JUST YOU AND ME NOW, CIRCE!
©DC Comics

figures out what he wants in there. On the other hand, if I have a script, I will generally put it in, in pencil."

Don then sends his pages in to the company for inking. He showed me a panel he particularly liked, from *Wonder Woman*. She and Steve Trevor were standing amidst a whole mess of machinery. "With the complicated machinery or backgrounds your characters still have to stand out as far as that goes. You can't have it so confusing that the readers can't see them."

After inking, the pages have to be colored. "They take the inked page," he explained, "and reduce it to a 6" by 9", the size of the comics page. This reduced page is given to the colorist, who colors it, and then it is sent to an engraver for that printing."

This schedule is changed slightly when Don does his own inking, as he generally prefers to do. "I don't tighten the pencils up when I'm going to ink it," he said. "I go straight from my rough drafts and ink in the detail. If it's complex, though, like a crowd scene, I may tighten it up first, then ink it.

"Most times, though, someone has inked over me. Not that I wanted it that way, but the company wants it that way. They get more pencils out of me. But that's why I'm now doing *Wonder Woman*, because I wanted to ink it. I'm staying with *Wonder Woman* for the present. You enjoy the magazines you work for—or you get off them! In fact, *Justice League* is an example. I was going slow. Gerry Conway was taking a long time getting the scripts to me, so I finally said to them, 'I'd like to get off this for a while—like forever!'

"If you draw 37 characters, you get no more money for it than for drawing one. And twice a year in *Justice League* you had this cross-over with the *Justice Society*. I had fifteen heroes to remember... I wrote it all down, so I could remember who was in it! It was driving me crazy!"

SIGNING SESSIONS

All this time, he had been autographing comics (some of which he couldn't even recall having done, he's done so many) and drawing small heads of characters for the fans. Why just heads? "I tried it once, drawing figures," he answered. "But it's too crazy. They're too complex for a quick sketch. I just do heads now."

One young boy asked for a head of the Vision. Don asked to see a comic with a picture of him. When the boy looked startled, Don laughed. "I'm not going to *copy* it! It's been a long time, I don't recall his costume!"

Who are his own favorite artists? "Joe Kubert, John Buscema, Jose Garcia-Lopez. I just saw *Atari Force #6*—fantastic! I like that one, one of the best comics I've seen."

A fan asked him who his favorite Avenger is. "I don't know," he answered promptly. "I haven't the slightest idea. There's really so many characters you can't get involved with them. I was on so many, and you jump off and on, off and on.

"Most people who read it know a lot more about it than I do. If I take that much time to read it and get all the background to it, I'd never get the artwork finished. The only thing I can tell you about the Vision is that he doesn't have a cleft in his chin. Roy Thomas was so upset one time when I put a cleft in his chin!" Perhaps that's because he's an android, I suggested, and Androids don't have cleft chins? "Bull!" he replied, happily enough. "The rest of him is human. I like to put a cleft in a character." He finished his sketch of the Vision and was about to hand it over when he paused, and his eyes twinkled. "I really *should* put a cleft in that chin, shouldn't I?" he laughed, and handed it over to the fan —without a cleft!

The next fan wanted Batman, so he set to work. "If you take half the costumes away," he commented, "the characters are going to look very similar. Really, you take the face, the hair, a little distinguishing thing here or there and just change them slightly, and you have another character."

One thing I had noticed about Don's characters was that they tend to have their mouths open most of the time. "Well," he explained, "if you've got them talking, they look kinda funny without their mouths open! At Marvel I used to do that, draw them with their mouths closed. That's the way it was always done in comics. They used to complain, though, 'Hey, this guy is talking, and you've got the mouth closed!' That was when Stan (Lee) was in charge. I guess no one jumps on that much now." He grinned. "He probably couldn't find anything bigger to complain about—I mean, an editor has to do *something*! Stan wasn't really a perfectionist, but there was this 'There's got to be a reason for me being here!'" He laughed.

Back to a sketch, this time of Wonder Woman. "That one I should know!" he smiles. "Can't have extra lines on a woman's face, or it doesn't look right... Oh, that made her mean-looking. Well, we can change that..." Out with an eraser. "Patience, patience...".

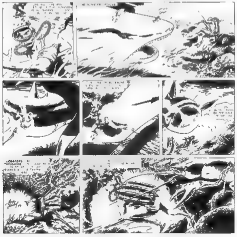
As I left the Serendepity comic store where I had been talking to Don, he had just grabbed another pad. "Okay," he said to the next fan. "And what would you like?" He was having a great deal of fun, doing what he does best—drawing.

JACK KIRBY PORTFOLIO

THE LONE RIDER

by Lance Kirby

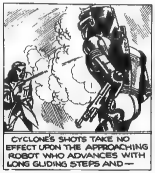
HUTCH KRUGER AND HIS HENCHMEN PREPARE FOR THEIR BIGGEST ROBBERY IN "THREE FORKS" COUNTY
YOU HEARD ME, GET SET TO RIDE WE'LL ATTEND TO HANK FLETCHER LATER!
LANCE KIRBY



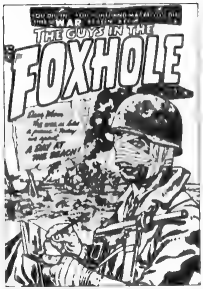
"CYCLONE" BURKE

By Bob Brown

SOME NEW ENEMY TRICK EH? WELL THEY WON'T TAKE ME WITHOUT A FIGHT! OKAY FELLERS - TRY AND GET ME!!
HE'S CONSCIOUS NOW! I WANT HIM SUBDUED, NOT HARMED, USE YOUR RETRAC-TENTACLE IN MAKING THE CAPTURE!



Love
young
Love
#1
the ORIGINAL YOUNG ROMANCE COMIC

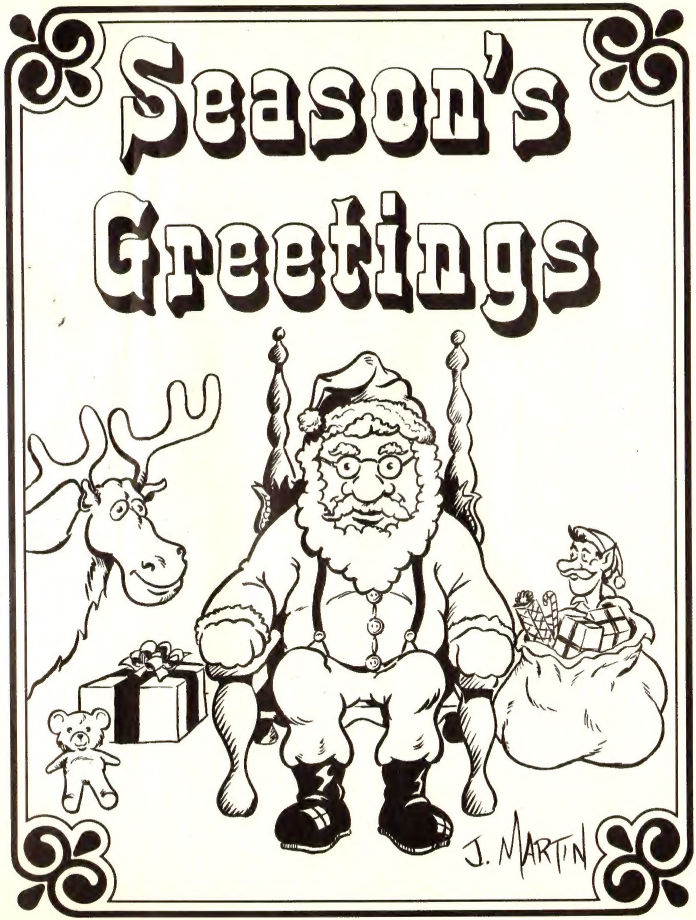

THE GUYS IN THE
FOXHOLE

OFFO!

THE STRANGE WORLD OF
TRUE
YOUR
DREAMS
WE WILL BUY YOUR DREAMS!

BLACK
MAGIC

WELCOME
DEAD
CENTER


Season's
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